

Diversity Discourse and the Ontario Educator: The Understandings of Race and  
Whiteness Among New White Ontario Teachers

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## **Abstract**

As a recent teacher education graduate, I have been left with more questions than answers about how to create and maintain an equitable and antioppressive classroom. These complicated questions of equity laid the groundwork for this study, which explored how new teachers understood diversity, specifically whiteness, and how they connected these perceptions to their course-related experiences in their teacher education program. Using a qualitative approach, this study problematized the lack of critical discussions around diversity taking place in Ontario teacher education courses. Through purposive, homogenous sampling, 7 new Ontario educators participated in a semistructured interview that focused on their experiences as teacher candidates and new teachers and their understandings and ideas regarding diversity, race, and more specifically, whiteness. The findings suggest that the greater Canadian discourse surrounding multiculturalism impacts the everyday diversity talk of the participants, and that problematic ideas of acceptance and tolerance are common. The findings also show a strong discomfort and unfamiliarity among the participants with the terms whiteness and white privilege. Finally, the results also revealed that new teachers have limited experience in their teacher education to discuss and learn about diversity, particularly critical discussions about race and privilege. Through this investigation, I aimed to bring attention to the necessity of having these critical, albeit difficult, discussions around diversity and whiteness in order to support new, predominately white, teachers.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study explored the various discourses of diversity among new white Ontario teachers. I refer to the term discourses as “distinctive ways people talk, read, write, think, believe, value, act, and interact with things and other people to get recognized (and recognize themselves) as a distinct group or distinctive kinds of people” (Gee, 2004, p. 39). Moreover, in the context of this research, diversity is defined as “the various forms of differences among people, such as race, gender, ability, religion, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation” (Egbo, 2009, p. 231). This study investigated how new teachers understood diversity, specifically whiteness<sup>12</sup>, and how they connected these perceptions to their experiences in the courses they took in their teacher education program. To do so, I interviewed seven Ontario educators who are new to the field of teaching. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used as a methodological framework for this study. Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) and James Gee’s (2004, 2005) work on discourse combined to provide a theoretical framework.

### Personal Story

When I started my postsecondary journey 7 years ago, I was an ambitious young white woman who wanted nothing more than to be an elementary school teacher. During that time, I believed that my passion for teaching and for children, my patience and my

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<sup>1</sup> I acknowledge the political nature of racialized language and how language can help uphold dominant ideologies around race and white supremacy. As such, I strategically include words that reference racially dominant groups in lowercase, while words used to reference members of the nondominant group are capitalized and recognized as proper nouns.

<sup>2</sup> I refer to the term whiteness as “a social location whose meaning and status stands in strict relation to others” (Levine-Rasky, 2012, p. 86). That is, whiteness is a system of power that was created by and privileges those who are white over other races, with this system going largely unnoticed and unnamed by those of the dominant group.

determination, and my love of learning would be what would make me a great educator. Growing up, and even to this day as a graduate student, I was told that these things are at the heart of being a good teacher. Although these are valuable characteristics to possess as an educator of young minds, I have come to realize that there are some things that are even more important—more vital—as a teacher, particularly if we are to meet our students’ diverse needs.

Reflecting on my educational experiences, many of my undergraduate courses were exactly what I expected and wanted them to be at the time; we would have frequent discussions about the joys of teaching and the passion and hard work that was required. My institution and instructors reassured me through these courses that I had what it took to be a great teacher. It was not until the fourth and final year of my undergraduate degree in the Concurrent Education program that I had a wake-up call. I decided to enroll in an elective Child and Youth Studies course that focused on race and racism within Canadian society. As a middle class white woman who considered herself to be a very liberal, accepting individual, I did not expect to have the revelations I ended up having in this course. The course deeply expanded my knowledge about the many inequities within Canada for those who are not white, whether it was in the school system, in the media, or in the greater Canadian society, and even more importantly, the effects such inequities have on marginalized<sup>3</sup> individuals. However, what impacted me most strongly in the

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<sup>3</sup> I use the term “marginalized” to refer to racial groups outside of the racially dominant group and to acknowledge the disadvantages at the individual, institutional, and/or systemic level for those of the nondominant group. It is important to note that although I refer to marginalized groups in terms of race in the context of this study, I recognize that marginalized groups go beyond the social construction of race and include gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, among other social identities, and that social identities are not monolithic in nature.



course was the topic of whiteness. It was in this course that I first read Peggy McIntosh's (1990) iconic article about white privilege, an article that inspired a passion in me to learn more about whiteness. The course and its critical attention to whiteness opened my eyes to the power and privilege that I possess as a white person and how my racial identity influences the classrooms I am in. As discussed in the course readings and lectures, I realized I too experienced guilt and shame about my ignorance and the ignorance of others before me. However, I began to realize that this guilt is unproductive and ultimately stifles my learning, a realization that prompted me to continue to learn about, question, and critique the whiteness and racism in my everyday life as a white Canadian. It is here that my journey as an antiracist educator began.

This personal transformation made me more aware of the lack of opportunity to have critical discussions about race and diversity issues that I, and my fellow teacher candidates, had in the teacher education program I attended. It also brought to my attention the larger problem around diversity discourse and how we as educators discuss and talk about diversity. There were no courses that focused on diversity and the number of times it was discussed in my required classes was limited. Furthermore, when diversity was brought up, it was often uncritical, broad discussions that did not bring to light the racial disparities within the school system we all would be entering. Rather than discuss diversity in terms of inequity, it was consistently framed as something our passion and hard work would overcome. As I continued my education, I found myself becoming more frustrated that as a teacher candidate I had little opportunity to discuss and reflect upon issues of diversity, including my whiteness and the implications this might have for my teaching. So although I graduated from my teacher education program feeling proud

and accomplished, I simultaneously felt unprepared for the diverse classrooms I was yet to encounter in my career.

These experiences have all led me here, to graduate school and to this research. Feeling underprepared and having a strong desire to learn more, I went straight to graduate school after finishing my teacher education. Since that undergraduate course that opened my eyes, and truthfully, changed my life, I have been yearning to know more about the effects, power, and negotiation of whiteness within schools. After experiencing the uncritical discussions of diversity in my teacher education program, I became motivated to investigate and explore this widespread issue. I wanted to not only understand other teachers' experiences and their understandings of whiteness and diversity but hoped to contribute to the growing literature in Canada about whiteness and address the need for radical change in our education system concerning racism and discrimination. This is a life-long journey about which I am committed and passionate. It is this awareness of whiteness and its permeation in Ontario's education system and the broader Canadian society, this understanding of race and privilege, and this urge to challenge the status quo, particularly in regards to diversity discourse, that I now realize is fundamental as a teacher.

### **Background to Problem**

The discourse within Ontario teacher education programs promotes particular ways of thinking and teaching that uphold the ideologies of the dominant culture (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005; White, 2012). Within this context, ideas of diversity, acceptance, and equity are often approached and discussed by educators in liberal, uncritical terms, while marginalized views and stories are often silenced (Bedard,

2000; Chapman, 2013; Taylor & Tilley, 2013). Hence, part of the problem is the word diversity and the language around the term, which carries benign meanings that detract from more critical discussions and approaches to diversity. How cultural diversity, in particular, is approached in schools often raises controversy and critique about how and what students should be taught and by whom. As Egbo (2009) defines it, and as stated previously, cultural diversity refers to “the various forms of differences among people, such as race, gender, ability, religion, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation” (p. 231). Although all of these social identifiers contribute to the formation of one’s identity and shape experiences, for the purpose of this research my focus was specifically on racial diversity and how it is discussed, approached, and (mis)understood within the Ontario education system, particularly among new white teachers who have recently completed an Ontario teacher education program. Such an exploration is also significant because as scholars recognize, while race is a social construct, it carries importance and meaning in how it is lived and experienced (Egbo, 2009; James, 2010; Satzewich & Liodakis, 2010). Further, a focus on whiteness is meaningful because, as Solomon et al. (2005) explain, it allows for an opportunity to “interrogate and change the construction of whiteness as an unmarked narrative, invisible category, and white privilege as unearned and unmeritocratic” (p. 148).

In the educational context, the concept of diversity is often employed in attempts to achieve equality. However, as James (2000) suggests, “racial equality” often insinuates sameness and colour blindness—terms that have become synonymous with diversity. Yet, “seeing everyone as the same, [and] not acknowledging difference, is to deny the diversity, complexity and contradictions within society, groups and, correspondingly, the

multifaceted identities of individuals” (James, 2000, p. 15). Such a focus on sameness also suggests that by ignoring difference, discrimination and injustice disappear not only within the classroom, but also within society. Within this context, the understanding of diversity that is commonly held in schools leads to minimal attention regarding the effects of race and racism within education and society. This uncritical focus, in turn, tends to uphold dominant group norms. Instead, for the purpose of this study, I define and use a more critical definition of diversity that draws on critical understandings of the term diversity in the Canadian context. First, my critical definition of diversity is about difference and an individual’s right to difference, free from prejudice or discrimination at the individual, institutional, and/or systemic level (James, 2000). I understand diversity as acknowledging and addressing social, economic, and political inequities and incorporating issues of power and privilege (Dhamoon, 2009). It is important to also highlight that there is no neutral position in this critical definition, with diversity not just referring to people of the nondominant group (Ahmed, 2007).

Multiculturalism is a term commonly used to define Canada and its broad range of cultures, ethnicities, and races that comprise its large population. At the same time, it has become “a discourse within the Canadian national identity” and a particular focus in the education system (Bedard, 2000, p. 48). Multicultural education, which is informed by the federal Multiculturalism Policy, plays a significant role in the discourses of diversity in Canada. It operates under the idea that Canadian society is culturally neutral and that because of this “acceptance” of all, everyone should be able to practice and express their cultures, religions, and languages, despite this not being the lived reality for many Canadians (James, 2010). Attention to diversity and difference in schools through

the lens of multicultural education tends to reflect educators' desire to hold on to the idea that Canada is a culturally democratic and meritocratic society in which individual effort and ability are what determine student success or failure (Egbo, 2011; Taylor & Tilley, 2013). This perspective also holds that what does and does not work in schools is not about the culture of the school but how individuals apply themselves. This viewpoint contributes to the neutralized discourse of diversity and to dismissals of ideas of difference. If educators are to effectively address the limitations of an educational system then teachers must also carry with them a critical analysis of students' differences in relation to structural inequities based on race and racism (Preskill & Jacobvitz, 2001). In the context of today's education system, educators must be critical participants, that is, they must be conscious of their own race and privileges and be able to critically reflect and interrogate their school activities, pedagogical approaches, and curriculum materials (Picower, 2009; Preskill & Jacobvitz, 2001). Moreover, they must do so in ways that will ultimately help students develop a critical understanding and consciousness of their location in the education system and within the power relations of society.

So few of today's white, middle class teachers, who represent the majority of teachers in Ontario, have the knowledge and ideologies of an antiracist educator, that is, the understanding and beliefs that lend to critically challenging issues of race and racism in the classroom (Bedard, 2000, Dei, 2000, Milner, 2010). An antiracist educator interrogates "both structural barriers to and social practices for systemic change," while pursuing learning strategies that promote critical thinking and integrate issues of power, privilege, and race (Dei, 2000, p.34). This type of teacher pedagogy, although existent, is currently lacking in the Ontario education system. This quandary raises the question of

what teacher education programs are instilling in future teachers and how well they are preparing them to teach in a diverse range of classrooms. Teacher education programs are not standardized within Ontario; therefore, although some programs, predominately in urban areas, do provide some courses on diversity and multiculturalism, this is not consistent for all Ontario teacher education programs (Howe, 2014; Levine-Rasky, 2000). Providing these courses only in urban centers, which typically have a more culturally and racially diverse population, is problematic in and of itself, as it suggests that issues of diversity only need to be addressed where racial diversity is common. Further, topics of diversity, race, and whiteness do in fact need to be addressed in all teacher education programs in order to bring awareness to the dominant group about the privilege that they hold and the injustices that exist in the school system and within greater Canadian society. Yet, these discussions need to also go beyond uncritical, liberal expressions of multiculturalism that bring little attention to racism or to the effects of white privilege. Discussions, such as these, do not lead to change and do little for racial progress (Leonardo & Zemblyas, 2013).

Ultimately, these issues around diversity discourse are sizeable and affect many aspects of Canadian society broadly and of Ontario specifically. Yet for the purpose of this research, the goal was to address and investigate a small part of the much larger problem at hand, which is the lack of critical discussions around diversity, specifically whiteness, in Ontario teacher education courses.

### **Statement of Problem**

The research problem is the lack of criticality in discussions around diversity, specifically whiteness, in Ontario teacher education courses, which in turn contribute to

and uphold uncritical discourses of diversity. Despite the growing literature that supports the need for critical discussions on race, whiteness, and diversity (Sleeter, 2001; Solomon et al., 2005; White, 2012), these sensitive topics are not consistently addressed and explored within teacher education (Picower, 2009). The reasons for this could vary, including guilt, fear, and a lack awareness of these issues. Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) requirements and immediate practitioner needs may also be perceived as more pressing issues within the program, reducing or eliminating conversations around diversity topics. However, such reasons do not justify the absence of these discussions, especially when most of today's Ontario teachers are white (Dlamini & Martinovic, 2007; Solomon et al., 2005). Teacher candidates could benefit from the opportunity to not only realize and comprehend the invasiveness of whiteness and white privilege, but to also question it and understand how it influences their own lives and the discourses of neutrality that they regularly take part in. To support this notion, Solomon et al. (2005) state that "teachers need to be provided with the spaces ... where they can address their questions and concerns, prepare them for the range of emotions they might experience, and provide opportunities to interrogate their prior experiences" (p. 162). These experiences, or lack thereof, contribute to the discourses of diversity teachers bring into the classroom and affect their ability and willingness to discuss, teach, and reflect on diversity issues. Hence, it is important to learn about new (white) teachers' understandings of diversity in order to help investigate the potential effectiveness of teacher education in preparing educators for diverse classrooms and conversations, as well as to better understand the beliefs, norms, and values of those new to the profession. Doing so can help to identify challenges and help provide opportunities to address these

issues. However, the unfortunate reality is that teacher education programs currently are not providing the knowledge, resources, or depth for future teachers to do this effectively (Egbo, 2011; Titone, 1998; Picower, 2009; White, 2012).

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how new teachers understood diversity, specifically whiteness, and how they connected these perceptions to their experience in courses they took in their teacher education program. Gee's (2005) theory of discourse, which contends that the primary functions of language are "to support the performance of social activities and social identities and to support human affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions," guided this exploration of new teachers' diversity discourses (p.1).

New teachers' experiences in teacher education also played a crucial role within this exploration. Teacher education programs are a central influence in the formation of a teacher identity among future educators (White, 2012). I argue that issues of diversity, particularly those surrounding racial discrimination and whiteness, need to not only be a part of these programs but they also need to go beyond surface level, uncritical discussions of multiculturalism. As such, I aim to complicate the term diversity in my analysis of participant interviews in order to go beyond the benign, uncritical meaning that diversity usually holds in the education context. I do this by approaching the term diversity critically and through the use of CDA as a methodological framework to investigate the diversity discourses of the teacher participants. I argue this is important, particularly for the purpose of this study, as the term diversity often reinforces and is code for avoidance of whiteness and race, among other things. Despite living in a nation



that is claimed to be multicultural, research suggests that there is still a lack of opportunity for teachers to engage with ideas of diversity, race, and whiteness (Egbo, 2011; Kincheloe, 1999; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Lund & Carr, 2013). This fact mirrors my experience in teacher education. Although I realize that not every pre-service teacher had (or will have) the same experience as I and that there is an increase in diversity courses and programs available at some postsecondary institutions (Levine-Rasky, 2000), there is still a disconnect between teachers and racially diverse students. This disconnect aligns with the inequitable outcomes in education that still exist for marginalized students (Levine-Rasky, 2000; Taylor & Tilley, 2013). It was my aim through this research process to explore the larger role teacher education can and should have in addressing diversity in schools and in educating, informing, and equipping new teachers with knowledge and critical thought around issues of diversity.

CWS will contribute to this investigation and analysis. With the majority of teachers in Canada being white, middle class females and Canada being governed by Eurocentric ideals, I argue that whiteness, white privilege, and discourses of neutrality permeate Ontario teacher education programs and, hence, need to be part of this discussion on diversity. Although this is an issue in itself, it is further problematic that the complex issue of whiteness most often remains untouched and unnoticed (Picower, 2009). White teachers, in particular, need to “take the journey him or herself” in learning about and understanding whiteness and the impact it can and does have within the classroom (Helms, 1990, p. 219). It is my hope that this study will provide some insight into why deeper, more critical discussions of diversity need to be addressed in teacher education programs.

### **Research Questions**

In this study, the central research questions I explored are:

1. What is/are the discourse(s) surrounding diversity, more specifically whiteness, among teacher education graduates?
2. How do recent teacher education graduates/new teachers connect their perceptions of diversity, specifically whiteness, to courses they took in their teacher education program?

### **Importance of Study/Rationale**

As Frankenberg (1997) states, “Whiteness makes itself invisible precisely by asserting its transparency” (p. 6). It is the making of whiteness as a visible concept that is a key proponent of CWS (Frankenberg, 1997; Leonardo, 2004; Sleeter, 2001). The issue of whiteness in education, in particular, is becoming a more common area of interest for scholars, yet predominately in the American context. Although there increasingly is more work being done within Canada (Egbo, 2011; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Lund & Carr, 2013), I argue that there is still a need to examine how new (white) Ontario teachers are understanding and talking about diversity. These discourses of diversity that new teachers have, although rooted and shaped from a plethora of experiences, are influenced by their teacher education program and how and what they were taught to focus on in their teaching. These discourses ultimately help shape their teaching pedagogy, for better or for worse. How/if teacher education programs are preparing teachers to interrogate their privilege and identities are important to explore as they play an important role in their teaching (White, 2012). Having recently graduated from an Ontario teacher education program myself, I think it is crucial that a deeper exploration takes place about how, if at

all, these programs are preparing (predominately white) teachers for the world of education. This is especially significant considering not all education programs in Ontario have mandatory diversity courses. As well, given that faculties of education have control over the delivery of teacher education, and because they have the freedom, within certain parameters, to develop their own programs, the attention to issues such as diversity remains inconsistent (Kitchen & Petrarca, 2013/2014). Yet, it is valuable to note that this knowledge and preparation is not just important for white teachers and/or diverse classroom settings, but for all teachers and all classrooms. Understanding whiteness and engaging in antiracist and social justice pedagogy are integral for all teachers in order for educators to genuinely and critically take into consideration their complex identities, racial locations, and privileges, no matter who or where they are teaching.

I anticipate that the findings of this study will be valuable to teachers, administrators, and policy makers within the field of education. In part, this study highlighted the experiences and understandings of some new Ontario teachers concerning diversity. This provides insight into the opportunities and familiarity educators have with diversity issues, particularly regarding their experiences in teacher education. As well, this study spoke to what critical discussions are necessary within teacher education programs. This includes, but is not limited to, whiteness and its permeation within not only Ontario schools, but within the greater Ontario society as well. Thus, I anticipate that my exploration of whiteness and diversity can create a discussion within the field of education about the gaps in training for future educators and the importance of deeper, more critical thought regarding diversity.

### **Theoretical Framework**

CWS was an important and appropriate framework to apply to my research. The field of CWS stems from the work of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which was first established in 1970 in response to civil rights concerns (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As “a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 3), CRT encapsulates issues of whiteness, white supremacy, and racial discrimination. However, with these issues gaining more attention in recent years, CWS allows for a deeper analysis and dialogue on the issues and omnipresence of whiteness as it focuses predominately on the social construction of whiteness and its role in the social, political, cultural, and historical aspects of any given society.

CWS “expose[s] white lies, maneuvers, and pathologies that contribute to the avoidance of a critical understanding of race and racism” (Leonardo, 2004, p.141). Whiteness is seen as a constructed yet invisible entity that exists in all facets of life (Frankenberg, 1997). As Levine-Rasky (2000), a key CWS scholar, states, “Whiteness is more than the sum total of white privilege, white power, white ethnicity. It is a phenomenon produced by and productive of social contexts of power” (p. 285). Hence, through CWS, a critique is provided of the superiority and supremacy that is associated with whiteness, with the aim of dismantling the disparity (socially, politically, economically) among races. Moreover, a CWS approach involves “a critical study of the structural and cultural contexts in which members have come to enact their white privilege, their racial identity, and their white ethnicity with specific effects for whites and for racialized groups” (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 285). Through my research I hope to

bring attention to the pervasiveness of whiteness within Ontario teacher education programs by investigating the understandings of whiteness among recent teacher education graduates. The work around whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy that captures the heart of CWS was particularly valuable while I worked with (white) educators and discussed and analyzed their ideas and experiences surrounding diversity, as it provided a focus on the structural and cultural contexts that influence the participants' discourse as white educators. Further, this framework assisted me by providing context and theoretical support as I delved into the discussions, issues, and experiences within teacher education programs in Ontario.

Although I come from a CWS perspective, I am also informed by an antiracist pedagogy. These two perspectives work together to combat racism and discrimination and have the same goal of critiquing and disrupting the oppressive structure and status quo within society. Antiracist pedagogy “is a discourse that directly challenges domination and power while at the same time allowing a space for White people to produce a new anti-racist identity” (Bedard, 2000, p. 41). Moreover, antiracist pedagogy is “a critical discourse of race and racism in society that challenges the continuance of racializing social groups for differential and unequal treatment” (Dei, 2000, p. 27). This type of pedagogy challenges whiteness and the power that it holds in not only schools, but also greater society, and aims for social change. Hence, the work of antiracist education complements the CWS framework that guides my research and was valuable when examining teachers' understandings of whiteness and diversity.

Gee's (2005) theory of discourse also provided a valuable framework to apply to my research. The term discourse itself is very much contested in regards to how it is used

and applied and holds different meanings in various disciplines of study. For example, some approaches to discourse focus on the “content” of the words being used or the themes being discussed, while other approaches concentrate on grammar and how grammar creates meaning in a variety of contexts (Gee, 2011). Moreover, the discipline and approach to discourse affects how meaning is discussed and what theories are applied. Gee (2005), in particular, asserts that there is an abundance of discourses in any modern society, all of which are ingrained within the social institutions of that particular population. He believes that discourse analysis must be critical because language is inherently political, stating that CDA goes beyond looking at how language works and seeks to “speak to and, perhaps, intervene in, social or political issues, problems, and controversies in the world” (p. 9). Gee (2005) further argues that there are two different, albeit connected, components of discourse. In a broad sense, Discourse, with a capital “D,” involves “ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity” (Gee, 2005, p. 21). These Discourses are distinctive and encompass more than just language. For instance, an example of big “D” discourse is the identity and belief of many Canadians that they, as a country, are multicultural and accepting. On the other hand, discourse, with a little “d,” is “language-in-use or stretches of language (like conversations or stories)” (Gee, 2005, p. 26). An example of this is the language that educators use while teaching a lesson in the classroom. It is this “little d” discourse that involves the everyday language of people, which encompasses the daily conversations and dialects had and used by people to communicate and produce meaning.

Further, Gee (2005) argues that “meanings of words, when we look at them in their actual contexts of use, are not general,” but instead inherently situated (p. 53). Hence, meaning in language is tied to personal experiences, beliefs, and values. Any given Discourse can and does have multiple identities, as “people are always, in history, creating new Discourses, changing old ones, and contesting and pushing the boundaries of Discourses” (Gee, 2005, pp. 29-30). This theoretical framework, therefore, stresses that language goes beyond communicating information; it is used to endorse precise social activities and identities while connecting people to social groups and cultures (Gee, 2005).

It is the discourse(s) surrounding diversity, both big and little “d,” that I explored within my research. Gee’s (2005) theory of discourse was a practical and rational framework to connect new teachers’ diversity talk with the greater Discourse(s) within Ontario and Canada concerning diversity. Gee (2011) is also well-known for his work on (critical) discourse analysis, which involves “the details of speech (and gaze and gesture and action) that are arguably deemed *relevant* in the context where the speech was used *and* that are relevant to the arguments the analysis is attempting to make” (p. xi). With the use of CDA as a methodological framework for this research, his work in the area, particularly his “tool kit,” which consists of 27 tools for conducting discourse analysis, was of importance to my study. This method of research allowed me to focus specifically on how and why language is used by my participants when discussing the sensitive topics of diversity, race, and whiteness, and the greater Discourses and social structures underlying this language.

### **Scope and Limitations**

For the purpose of this study, I focused exclusively on race and whiteness within the broader context of diversity education. I chose these specific foci because of personal interests and passions, but also to narrow down the many aspects that diversity encompasses. However, I do acknowledge that racial diversity is just one of the many forms of diversity that can and do take form in Ontario classrooms and within the greater society. I also recognize that race is just one of the many social categories that help create a human identity, and that it intersects with class, gender, and sexuality, among other locations, to create intricate, complex experiences (Dei, 2000). Yet, just because I focused on racial diversity, does not mean my participants did in the interviews. Hence, diversity as a broader term was also explored in the analysis.

Further, for this study, the primary objective was to investigate the experiences and understandings of white teachers, despite not limiting my participant search to white educators. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this primary objective was not to devalue the experiences of marginalized teachers, but to investigate and give attention to the ways in which whiteness tends to be unnoticed and ignored by those within the dominant group. I recognize that it could be argued that a focus on whiteness detracts from a focus on marginalized communities and ultimately only serves to re-privilege whiteness (Gallagher, 2000; Solomon et al., 2005). The aim of CWS, and my particular research, is not to reassert whiteness but to expose it and critique its prominent place in society. Attention to whiteness contributes to a more critical and useful approach to difference and diversity in schools; it encourages individuals with racial privilege to



reflect and interrogate their position in society and helps bring awareness regarding the role that whiteness plays in and out of the classroom.

Thus, for my research, I believe that it is important to gain a deeper understanding of how white teachers, in particular, discuss and understand diversity. By doing so, I can learn about first-hand accounts of teacher education experiences and the understanding white teachers possess concerning their whiteness as they enter the teaching profession.

### **Outline of the Remainder of the Document**

The remainder of this document includes a review of relevant literature, methodology and procedures, presentation of results, and discussion and implications. Chapter Two includes a review of related literature that addresses white racial identity development, whiteness, discourses of diversity, teacher education, and social justice and antiracist education. Chapter Three outlines the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as methodology for this research, as well as site and participant selection, data collection and data analysis procedures, assumptions and limitations, and ethical considerations employed in this research. Chapter Four presents the results of this study, organized by five overarching themes. The final chapter, Chapter Five, concludes the thesis with a discussion of the study's findings in connection to the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and the reviewed literature. Implications and recommendations for future research and the field of education are also included.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The aim of this chapter is to present a theoretical foundation that guides my research. This chapter examines literature related to white racial identity development, as well as whiteness and the discourses of diversity, particularly as they operate in Canada and in the field of education. I will also explore the structure and implications of teacher education programs and social justice and antiracist education.

### White Racial Identity Development

Racial identity is “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s *perception* that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group” (Helms, 1990, p. 3). A racial identity is commonly assumed among marginalized individuals, yet rarely emphasized by those who are white. This stems from the privilege and power associated with being white, as white individuals have the ability to ignore and neutralize race, allowing themselves to simply be individuals and not racialized individuals (Case, 2012).

Helms’ (1990) work on white racial identity development is particularly useful for understanding the different emotions and behaviours of white individuals when they learn and discuss topics of race and whiteness. Helms’ white identity development model consists of six stages, with the end goal of a nonracist white identity. The Contact stage is the first of the six stages in which a white individual is guided by stereotypes and holds a naïve, biased curiosity and/or fear of marginalized people. In the Disintegration stage, feelings of guilt and shame are common, which stem from being exposed to and learning more about the racism, intolerance, privilege, and prejudices that exist in any given society and how they themselves are implicated in these realities. In this stage,

individuals commonly try to ease these uncomfortable feelings through acts of denial (Helms, 1990). The third phase is called the Reintegration stage, which is characterized by a yearning to be accepted by the racial group with which an individual identifies. During this stage, the credence of white superiority is rampant (Helms, 1990). By the fourth stage, which is called Pseudo-Independent, the white individual begins to desert prior beliefs and understandings about white superiority, despite potentially still inadvertently upholding a system of supremacy. In the fifth stage, called Immersion/Emersion, the individual feels discomfort with his or her own whiteness and struggles to find a new identity (Helms, 1990). It is in this stage that the person begins to learn and accept more accurate information about whiteness. In the sixth and final stage, called Autonomy, the white individual has the desire and confidence to confront racism and Whiteness in his or her everyday life (Helms, 1990). While there are challenges with stage models, as identity is fluid, such a perspective is useful for understanding the experiences of whiteness and identity development among newly qualified teachers entering the classroom setting.

### **Whiteness: Power, Privilege, and Invisibility**

When looking specifically at the education context, white educators are generally entering classrooms unaware of the bias, marginalization, and continued white dominance that they are reinforcing (Solomon et al., 2005). Further, when issues surrounding whiteness, privilege, and racism are brought to the attention of a member of the dominant group, denial, guilt, and resistance are common reactions (Case, 2012; Dei, 2000; Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & DeFiore, 2002; Leonardo, 2004; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Matias and Allen (2013) argue that it is difficult for people of the dominant group

to acknowledge and address their born privilege because they are deeply invested in the system that gives them an advantage, which is why these emotions and reactions tend to occur. McIntyre (1997) refers to these behaviours and emotions as “white talk,” which white educators use to dismiss notions of white privilege and white supremacy.

Similarly, Picower (2009) argues that many pre-service and practicing teachers use “tools of whiteness” as a way to actively dismiss, avoid, or undermine issues of race and privilege. In particular, Picower believes there are three types of tools: ideological, performative, and emotional. These tools “facilitate in the job of maintaining and supporting hegemonic stories and dominant ideologies of race, which in turn, uphold structures of White supremacy” (Picower, 2009, pp. 204-205). After completing research concerning white pre-service teachers and their understandings of whiteness, Picower comes to define ideological tools of whiteness as “beliefs to which [the participants] subscribe to protect their hegemonic stories” (p. 206). Notions of colour blindness and meritocracy were common beliefs articulated by the white pre-service teachers that were used to deny and uphold white supremacy. These beliefs are not rare among white individuals, with many other scholars noting similar responses (Chapman, 2013; Egbo, 2009; Sleeter, 2001; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003). To further protect their beliefs and hegemonic understandings, white individuals commonly use performative tools of whiteness. This includes remaining silent about issues of race and whiteness and making claims, such as “I would kiss a minority,” in hopes of not being seen as racist (Picower, 2009). In her work around pre-service teachers, Egbo (2011) found similar results, stating that “without proper training, even well-meaning teachers remain silent about race and

diversity citing instead, ‘colour blindness’ as the ultimate evidence of their aversion to racism and social injustices” (p. 33).

Picower (2009) asserts that the third and final tool of whiteness involves the emotions and feelings of her white participants when asked to discuss and confront ideas of white privilege, superiority, and supremacy. Statements such as “I never owned a slave” and “stop trying to make me feel guilty” were common ways for the pre-service teachers to disassociate themselves from racist ideologies and notions of privilege in order to try and deflect feelings of guilt and shame (Picower, 2009). The issue of white guilt is commonly noted among white educators who struggle to come to terms with their role in an education system and society that upholds white supremacist ideologies (Case, 2012; Egbo, 2011; Gillespie et al., 2002, Levine-Rasky, 2000; Solomon et al., 2005). For instance, Gillespie et al. discuss and analyze the strong reactions from several of their students in the university courses they taught in their article *White Women Teaching White Women*, with many of the participants admitting to strong feelings of guilt when learning about the implications of their privilege.

In his essay *The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the Discourse of ‘White Privilege’* Zeus Leonardo (2004) also discusses the issue of white guilt and how it blocks critical reflection from occurring. He suggests that white educators become too apprehensive about being deemed racist that they fail to see the systemic issue that is at play regarding race and privilege. This is found to be a common fear among many white individuals who learn about race, racism, and their own racial privilege (Levine-Rasky, 2000; Milner, 2010; Solomon et al., 2005) and is something that Picower (2009) too witnessed among her pre-service participants. This fear is damaging on several accounts. First, it places

racism on an individualistic level, ignoring the deeply seeded racist ideologies within society in which people are situated (Sleeter, 2000; Wildman & Davis, 2000). As Wildman and Davis argue,

to label an individual as racist veils the fact that racism can only occur where it is culturally, socially, and legally supported. It lays blame on the individual rather than the forces that have shaped that individual and the society that the individual inhabits. (p. 52)

This is not to say that individuals should not be educated about their racist sentiments; but, ideas of racism as purely individual acts lessen the severity of its consequences and its detrimental role within society. Second, the fear of being deemed a racist limits the ability to have necessary and critical conversations about race, discrimination, and whiteness. Milner (2010) discusses this further, finding that “this fear has stifled important conversations that have the potential to expand teachers’ mind-sets, particularly regarding diversity and opportunity gaps” (p. 156). He further suggests that this fear creates a counter-productive silence that can leave educators, particularly those who are white, “perplexed about *what* should be covered related to race, *where* (in what contexts) race can be addressed, and perhaps most important, *how* the issue might be explored” (p. 175).

Yet, there is also a prominent argument that although feelings of fear and guilt limit critical conversations and the aim for change, there still needs to be a sense of discomfort for white people when learning and discussing whiteness and racism, especially for positive change to occur in our education systems. For instance, Leonardo (2004) argues that “as long as whites ultimately feel a sense of comfort with racial

analysis, they will not sympathize with the pain and discomfort they have unleashed on racial minorities for centuries” (p. 150), suggesting that there needs to be a sense of discomfort in order for true reflection and change to occur. Taylor and Tilley (2013) suggest a similar journey, believing that “framing discussions of racism as not being a ‘White problem’” in order to avoid feelings of guilt and discomfort can “contribute to a rationale for teachers not to process and take these issues seriously” (p. 79). However, learning to understand white privilege and white supremacy, and our roles within these constructs, does not simply have to be a self-destructive journey. In fact, these scholars suggest that it needs to move beyond a self-destructive guilt in order for one to be proactive, critical, and reflective about whiteness.

The invisibility of whiteness has a domino effect within the classroom. When teachers do not acknowledge white privilege they, in turn, are unable to give students a chance to engage with this concept. McIntosh (1990) argues that there is a deeply rooted pressure to avoid discussions about white privilege because it challenges the myth of meritocracy. But, when teachers are able to learn and confront the role of white privilege in education, it makes them newly accountable to pass this knowledge on (McIntosh, 1990). Once teachers have engaged in ideas of white privilege and critically reflect on it, they can help instill critical thinking among their students as well. As Lyons (2010) states: “A teacher in search of his/her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own” (p. 230). In other words, a teacher cannot foster critical thinking among his or her students if they themselves do not engage in this process. In this sense, it is very much a negative cycle that exists in today’s Canadian schools: teachers do not recognize or dismiss the power of white privilege and

do not reflect on how this affects themselves and the classroom, and, in turn, students do not have opportunities to be critical thinkers about race, power, and privilege. The ignorance of the white-dominated society is passed down to teachers, who work (many unknowingly) to continue a state of ignorance in regards to white privilege.

Ultimately, the aim of these scholars is to create a critical dialogue about whiteness and white privilege (Frankenberg, 1997; Leonardo, 2004; Levine-Rasky, 2000; McIntosh, 1990; Solomon et al., 2005). The topic of whiteness and the privilege it entails needs to be a part of the discussion on race and diversity, particularly in the field of education, in order for it to be critically examined, interrogated, and challenged.

### **Discourses of Diversity**

Diversity is a term that is used in many different contexts and holds many different meanings. As James (2000) suggests, diversity is commonly understood as difference, whether it is difference among people, places, or things. Bell and Hartmann (2007) state that, “by appearing to recognize difference, yet failing to appreciate white normativity and systemic inequality, current diversity discourse makes it difficult to construct a meaningful multiculturalism or genuinely progressive politics of race” (p. 896). This claim regarding difference is supported by their research on common notions of diversity, finding that many of their participants view diversity in abstract terms and that their ideals about diversity are based on white normative assumptions. From their research, Bell and Hartmann further argue that, “the diversity discourse relies on assimilationist assumptions and employs linguistic tools that privilege white cultural norms and values while simultaneously naturalizing ‘other’ groups in racial terms as outside of the white mainstream” (p. 907). Moreover, the language of diversity is used to



mask the underlying issues of inequity, racism, and white supremacy that exist, suggesting instead that diversity involves “happy talk” and discussions of harmony and acceptance (Ahmed, 2012; Bell & Hartmann, 2007; Dhamoon, 2009; Lund, 2003; Taylor & Tilley, 2013). This happy talk is common within the field of education, with this language of diversity tending to focus on a celebration of differences while acting as “a coping mechanism for dealing with an actually conflicting heterogeneity” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 37). Ahmed (2012) further discusses this skewed view of diversity, suggesting that “diversity is often used as shorthand for inclusion, as the ‘happy point’ of intersectionality, a point where lines meet” (p. 14). The challenge is that such a focus on diversity “might allow only some things to come into view” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 14). In other words, when schools promote diversity and multiculturalism, it is often more appealing and beneficial for them to focus on the “happy points” as it suggests a focus on difference without having to engage in the difficult work of antiracism. Hence, positive change and movement towards an antiracist form of education remains difficult when these broad, naïve notions of diversity persist.

Often involved in discourses of diversity is the notion of equality (Egbo, 2009; Khayatt, 2000). The term equality “refers to a certain extent, to sameness or equivalence” (Khayatt, 2000, p. 260), with the assumption that people, particularly educators, should treat everybody the same. Yet, this ideology is highly contested, with the argument that it further ignores the systemic issues that take place in society that continue to discriminate and dehumanize people of the nondominant group. As James (2010) argues, “seeing everyone as the same, not acknowledging difference, is to deny the diversity, complexity and contradictions within society, groups and, correspondingly, the multifaceted

identities of individuals” (p. 15). Similarly, Satzewich and Liodakis (2010) discuss the issue of equality in their book *‘Race’ & Ethnicity in Canada: A Critical Introduction*, stating that the ideal of sameness and equal treatment is, in fact, racist “because it is premised on the belief that ‘White institutional power’ does not have to be dismantled in order for Canadian society to become fair and equal” (p. 194). Instead, there needs to be a push for equity, which unlike equality, “allows for individual differences while working toward a goal of social justice for all” (Khayatt, 2000, p. 260). An equity focus helps to acknowledge difference while working to fight discrimination that is often associated with social differences and being an “outsider” of the dominant group in society (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003).

Significant in explorations of teacher discourses of diversity is the particular context in which they live and teach. With Canada often being revered as a “multicultural” nation, it is important to explore how teachers interact and discuss the notion of diversity and multiculturalism within the education context. Many Canadians have come to associate their nation with multiculturalism and it is this stance as a multicultural country that has become part of the national identity (Bedard, 2000). Yet, this national identity that has been constructed, one that positions Canada as a welcoming, inclusive nation, is argued to be established and upheld by those who are white (Bedard, 2000; James, 2010). Moreover, critical scholars argue that we must understand multiculturalism as “an ideology and a set of federal government programs that are used to maintain social order and manage ethnic and ‘racial’ relations in poly-ethnic societies” (Satzewich & Liodakis, 2010, p. 175). This idealistic vision of Canada often is pitted against the nation’s American neighbour, with Canada being labeled the

“cultural mosaic” and the United States as a “melting pot” (Bedard, 2000; Dhamoon, 2009). Through this comparison, Canadians are able to define themselves as different from the United States, as more welcoming of multiculturalism, and inherently less racist (Bedard, 2000). Through this comparison and through multiculturalism as a policy and “vernacular practice,” which insinuate Canada as a morally good, accepting country, a false sense of multiculturalism and acceptance is created and upheld (Mahtani, Kwan-Lafond, & Taylor, 2014).

The implications of this uncritical diversity discourse and false sense of multiculturalism are rampant within Canadian society, and more specifically, Ontario’s education system. Identifying Canada as an accepting, multicultural country can impede critical discourses and make it difficult for these critical discussions to be initiated and explored. Moreover, the status quo remains intact and left unquestioned while many marginalized, particularly Black, students, continue to fall behind in school; on average they tend to receive lower grades and are more likely to be suspended or drop out when compared to their white peers (Dei, 1997; James, 2012). Further, there is a plethora of research that gives voice to marginalized students who are underrepresented and discriminated against within their schools (Cummins, 1997; Codjoe, 2001; James, 2012; James & Taylor, 2010). This does not match the picture-perfect image of Canada that is continuously represented in the media and in popular everyday discourse.

The notion of Canada being a noble, welcoming land masks the need for conversation and reform in regards to diversity and equity for all people. The reality for many marginalized Canadians is not ideal and is not equitable to their white Canadian counterparts (Bedard, 2000; Taylor & Tilley, 2013), yet these issues are lost within the

discourse of diversity in Canada. Also lost are the voices of minorities, who “continue to be excluded from full equality and equal participation in the mainstream society” (Leung, 2011, p. 20). Bedard suggests a similar trend, believing that a false sense of multiculturalism “has silenced the voices of those less desirable people or sanitized them to suit the political climate of the time” (p. 48).

Canada’s imperfect past is often absent in the discussion of Canadian multiculturalism (Bedard, 2000; Dhamoon, 2009). A history presented as void of discrimination and racism helps in portraying Canada as an accepting nation—one that is and has always been morally good. In her book *Identity/Difference Politics*, Rita Dhamoon notes the history of assimilation, segregation, and slavery missing from the discourse around multiculturalism in Canada, stating:

the histories of oppression experienced by people of colour and indigenous peoples are virtually absent in celebrations of multiculturalism: there is little talk of colonialism, racism, white privilege, sexism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, or capitalism, as if multiculturalism now makes up for the past and can correct present social inequalities (p. x)

With negative moments in history going unmentioned, and often untaught, the false sense of multiculturalism is upheld. Moreover, to indulge in these histories would challenge and negate Canada’s image as a country that is invested in diversity and multiculturalism, despite these histories still having severe repercussions today. The vagueness and inconsistencies found in official diversity discourses ultimately “gives contradictory signals to teachers and principals and might explain the failure of the true integration of student diversity in our system” (Gerin-Lajoie, 2008, p. 9). Without concrete

understandings and a strong consensus regarding how to promote and support student diversity, it remains difficult to implement a consistent, credible form of education that promotes equity and diversity for all individuals.

### **Teacher Education**

The 12 teacher education programs in Ontario vary in their attention to diversity training (Howe, 2014). With the majority of pre-service teachers being white, they generally enter the program with a lack of mindfulness or understanding of social inequity, particularly regarding race (Lund & Carr, 2013; Milner, 2006; Sleeter, 2001). Literature on race and teacher education suggests that this is in part due to their own schooling, being taught to not question or examine social difference and social injustice and from being informed by the happy talk discourse of diversity that permeates Canada (Bell & Hartmann, 2007; Lund & Carr, 2013). This limits the ability to engage in meaningful, critical work around social justice and antiracist education. Yet, not all pre-service teachers are taught the necessary knowledge about racism and diversity once they enter, and when they do, it is to varying degrees of effectiveness. The lack of awareness about racism and discrimination can lead to feelings of unpreparedness and ambivalence as pre-service teachers transition into the field of education (Sleeter, 2001), but it can also lead to the ideologies of the dominant group being upheld (Solomon et al., 2005). Issues of racism, whiteness, and discrimination remain silent in the classroom if educators feel uncomfortable discussing these topics, if they do not think it is a viable and important thing to address, and if they are never taught to tackle it (Milner, 2010). This silence “helps keep critical issues below the surface, allowing white teachers to remain

unmindful of their racial location and, thus, disconnected from (and not responsible for engaging/initiating) uncomfortable race talk” (Taylor & Tilley, 2013, p. 77).

When pre-service teachers are introduced to concepts and issues concerning race, racism, and whiteness, adopting a “colour blind” approach is common in order to manage the fear, guilt, and ignorance they may have (Chapman, 2013; Egbo, 2009; Sleeter, 2001; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003). As Applebaum (2005) asserts, “the colour-blind perspective is the point of view in which racial group membership is considered irrelevant to the ways that individuals are treated” (p. 282). Yet, the claim of being colour blind is often seen in dominant society as a morally “good” thing. Comments, such as “I do not see colour” and “I treat everyone equally,” are not uncommon statements made by pre-service and practicing teachers alike, who use this colour blind approach to distance themselves from discussions on race (Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Egbo, 2009; Picower, 2009). This idea that a person cannot “see race” maintains the silence about race and racism in the classroom; it becomes something unimportant and unnecessary to discuss or integrate into the classroom environment. The proclamation of colour blindness ignores the systemic racism that still exists within Canadian society while simultaneously upholding invisible dominant norms (Applebaum, 2005). The issue with a colour blind approach is prominent not just within the education system, but in broader Canadian society as well. For instance, Canadian multicultural policy documents commonly use the term “ethnicity,” which encourages “Canadians to retain their ethnic identity within the boundaries of the nation-state, but that the term “race” is noticeably omitted” (Mahtani et al., 2014, p. 247). This use of language, and the absence of others, is significant as it can divert people, particularly of the dominant group, from having critical discussions of

race, racialization, and racism as the important difference between ethnicity and race is not distinguished and issues around race and racism within Canada are not properly acknowledged. In turn, the language of ethnicity can prevent, or even excuse, people from using the language of race. Moreover, as Mahtani et al. explain, this language around ethnicity “has the effect of perpetuating colorblindness, making it more difficult to address racism” (p. 247). Thus, even while assertions of colour blindness may be well-intentioned, it is “unrealistic since race is often the first thing we tend to notice about people especially in racialized societies” (Egbo, 2011, p. 33). Although educators may feel as if they are benefiting their students by claiming to be colour blind, it actually acts as a disservice as they fail to recognize that everyone has prejudices and that no teacher can truly treat every student the same. As Nieto and Bode (2008) suggest in their book *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*, even “well-intentioned teachers are sometimes unintentionally discriminatory when they remain silent about race and racism ... As a consequence, most schools are characterized by a curious absence of talk about differences, particularly about race” (p. 74). Without the knowledge and training about race and diversity, pre-service teachers are less equipped to enter the classroom setting and empower students (and themselves) to create social change and fight injustice (Egbo, 2011).

In a similar fashion, many new white educators tend to enter the school system with a saviour mentality; a mentality that assumes that it is their responsibility to “save” disadvantaged others from their own demise. This mindset, which is commonly referred to as white saviour syndrome, “renders the misrepresentation of the potential of people of color to resist and lead the transformation of oppressive conditions within their own

social context” (Cammarota, 2011, p. 245). The idea of the white saviour is commonly displayed in the media, including popular films such as *Dangerous Minds* (Bruckheimer, 1995) and *Freedom Writers* (DeVito, 2007). In films such as these the liberal minded white teacher comes into a racially diverse classroom and saves his or her students from their oppression, in and outside of the education system. When looking at these portrayals in such cinematic treatments of race, people of color appear to lack the agency necessary to enact positive changes in their own lives. The underlying assumption is that people of color, on their own, fail to enact resilience, resistance, and success. (Cammarota, 2011, p. 245)

As well, this saviour mentality positions the white educator as superior, as having the necessary knowledge, tools, and privilege to empower and save those who are not white. It is what Cammarota refers to as a “false generosity” in which the white educator fails “to see how the maintenance of his or her higher status in relation to the oppressed perpetuates inequalities” (p. 256). With this false sense of generosity rarely being critiqued in education, but often supported, Allen (2004) claims that “we should not be surprised that white educators working in urban communities act out roles as ‘white knights,’ whose mission is to rescue people of color from oppression” (p. 128). The notion of the white saviour is in stark contrast to a white ally, who challenges the dominant ideologies, recognizes his or her privilege, and advocates for change in the education system in regards to race and diversity (Allen, 2004; Cammarota, 2011; Titone, 1998). A white ally collaborates with people of colour, looking to work together to combat the deeply ingrained racist ideologies in the education system. As this research



suggests, it is the ideals and goals of the white ally, not the saviour, which teacher education programs should be instilling into pre-service teachers.

Yet, research also suggests that there is little opportunity for pre-service teachers to learn about the necessity of having social justice educators and white allies in the school system (Egbo, 2011; Titone, 1998; White, 2012). There is an inconsistency within teacher education regarding the discussion of diversity and race in the curricula as the Ontario teacher education program is not standardized (Egbo, 2011; Kitchen & Petrarca, 2013/2014; Levine-Rasky, 2000). While some teacher education programs address diversity and race, the amount of depth and criticality in which these issues are discussed and analyzed ranges. Egbo (2011) stresses this when stating that “while some teacher education curricula address diversity-related issues, there is little explicit discussion of race and how it is implicated in the outcomes of education for particular groups of students” (p. 23). The implications of this are reflected in the newly qualified Ontario teachers entering the classroom who are often “entering the profession with a lifetime of hegemonic reinforcement to see students of color and their communities as dangerous and at fault for the educational challenges they face” (Picower, 2009, p. 211). In turn, these educators may not feel the urge or the responsibility to tackle social justice issues and to understand their position and privilege in the classroom and in society.

Although many scholars have argued that pre-service teachers must have the opportunity to learn about diversity and race-related issues and for them to explore and reflect on their whiteness has been argued by many scholars (Egbo, 2011; Solomon et al., 2005; White, 2012), teacher education programs in Ontario remain slow to implement more critical, in depth discussions of diversity and race into their curricula. Even with

teacher education transitioning from a 1- to 2-year program, with the promise of a larger focus on diversity, there are potential issues still at hand. Having one unit or one course on diversity issues is not going to radically change a pre-service teacher's worldview and pedagogy (Picower, 2009; Sleeter, 2000; White, 2012). Instead, it is argued that issues of diversity and race need to be deeply seeded in the curriculum; future teachers need to understand that these issues are not something that can be ignored or addressed haphazardly in the classroom. Thus, Picower suggests that "opportunities for both self-reflection and instruction about historical oppression and current educational inequity should be provided throughout the entire teacher education experience" (p. 212). In other words, the topics of diversity and race should not and cannot be condensed into one course, but instead should be integrated and a part of the entire teacher education program (Picower, 2009; Sleeter, 2000; White, 2012).

### **Social Justice and Antiracist Education**

Understanding social justice is important when discussing and learning about diversity, whiteness, and discrimination, particularly in the educational context, as it is the aim for social justice that is one of the underpinnings of wanting to make whiteness a viable and visible topic of discussion. In their book *Is Everyone Really Equal?*, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) state that "understanding social justice means that we must be able to recognize that relations of unequal social power are constantly being negotiated at both the micro (individual) and macro (structural) levels" (p. 145). Along with this is the importance of knowing our own roles and complicity within the imbalance of power in place in society in order for us to approach these topics critically (Applebaum, 2011; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Although there are educators who do actively support a social justice stance and try to implement social justice practices into their classrooms, research suggests that these teachers are not the norm (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Russo and Fairbrother (2009) suggest that teachers who do actively fight for social justice “notice examples of injustice every day in newspapers, magazines, and/or videos, and bring them into the classroom to help students relate the curriculum to their lives” (p. 11). Moreover, these educators “also recognize the connection between student success or failure and injustice in society. So, they make a commitment to do two things: teach so that all students can succeed and teach to help students learn about social injustice” (Russo & Fairbrother, 2009, p. 11).

Antiracist pedagogy, on the other hand, focuses specifically on race and whiteness with the attempt to “confront a system characterized by entrenched inequality and racism” (De Lissoy & Brown, 2013, p. 540). Yet, antiracist education does acknowledge and works to contest discrimination against all marginalized groups as well (Egbo, 2009). Antiracist education is one of the many ways in which inequality, oppression, and power disparity can be confronted and made evident. Dei (2000) argues that “anti-racism explicitly names the issues of race and social difference as issues of power and equity, rather than as matters of cultural and ethnic variety” (p. 27). Race is the predominant focus of antiracist work; to move beyond race is seen to be a denial of the influence that race has in regards to power and privilege within society (Dei, 2000). This does not imply that it is not valuable to look at other identifiers, such as gender and socioeconomic status, in relation to power and privilege. Instead, antiracist work simply

suggests that race must be acknowledged and be a central part of the conversation when looking to address and dismantle the social and educational inequities that exist.

Discussion of antiracist work in education is often paralleled with talk of multicultural education, as the two are often pitted against one another and are seen as having divisive ideologies. As Lund (2003) discusses, multicultural education is “characterized as consisting of short-term programmes and supplemental curricular material designed to cause attitudinal changes in individual students and teachers” (p. 5). Aligning with federal multiculturalism policies in Canada, this form of education is meant to celebrate and appreciate the large span of cultural heritages within the nation. Yet, this focus is often critiqued for focusing on the celebration of difference without attention to race or systemic oppression (Lund, 2003; Sleeter & Delgado, 2004). Thus, both a social justice and antiracist pedagogy are more suitable foundations for starting important discussions and learning opportunities about race, discrimination, and diversity. Both forms of education acknowledge and try to combat social inequity and power disparity. It is through these pedagogies that educators can provide students with “interpretations of the social world that expose rather than conceal systemic sources of experienced inequality” and “can help *all* students – the systemically disadvantaged *and* the historically privileged – to understand how they make meaning of their experiences” (Applebaum, 2011, p. 411).

I believe that social justice and antiracist education can be and should be pillars in all teacher education programs, yet it is evident that an understanding and criticality toward race and racism is lacking among pre-service teachers. This literature supports my goal of understanding new teachers’ beliefs and knowledge about diversity and race, with

there being a disconnect between the literature that suggests and supports the need for critical discussions of race to be implemented in education and the actual experiences and teachings that are taking place in classrooms.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided an extensive review of relevant literature in relation to white racial identity development, whiteness, discourses of diversity, teacher education, and social justice and antiracist education. The next chapter outlines the methodology and research design for the study.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES**

For my research, I used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a qualitative methodology to investigate how new Ontario educators understood diversity, specifically whiteness, and how they connected these perceptions to their experiences in the courses they completed in their teacher education program. Qualitative research is centered on the idea that “meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” and that there are “multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time” (Merriam, 2002, pp. 3-4). As such, a qualitative inquiry involves “understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context” (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). Moreover, qualitative researchers recognize the complexity of social phenomena and, thus, aim to approach and depict the issue in its multidimensional form (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Hence, in my study, it was my intention to explore and reveal new Ontario teachers’ understandings of diversity, while recognizing the difficulty of discussing race, the complexity of one’s racial identity, and acknowledging the changing interpretations and realities of the participants.

More specifically, I used CDA as the methodological framework for this study. Rogers and Schaenen (2014) highlight that, “CDA is well established as stance and methodology in the field of education” (p. 122). Moreover, they discuss how the use of CDA as methodology allows for a deeper understanding of “what kinds of socially significant meanings are expressed through talk and text” (Rogers & Schaenen, p. 124). Similarly, as Van Dijk (2003) states, CDA investigates “the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 352). Ryan and Johnson (2009) demonstrate the

importance of text and talk in their study on the negotiation of multiple identities among Australian youth. The authors use CDA as a methodological framework to examine interview talk among three high school students in regards to their identities in and out of the school context (Ryan & Johnson, 2009). For the purpose of this study, I used CDA as a research methodology to investigate the diversity discourse of newly qualified white teachers within an interview setting. Yet, I recognize and acknowledge that discourse goes beyond just a discussion during an interview and can also involve the ways an individual reads, writes, and/or acts (Gee, 2004). Thus, I used the interviews with participants as a “snapshot” of their diversity discourse, while recognizing that every aspect of an individual’s discourse cannot be detected through one interview. Moreover, CDA concerns itself with text at both the micro and macro level, which can be closely compared to Gee’s (2005) little d and big D discourse, as there is a focus on both the everyday language used and the beliefs, values, and power that exists in any given context (Van Dijk, 2003).

Gee’s (2011) work on discourse analysis was particularly pertinent to my study. Gee (2011) asserts that discourse analysis is based on significant details of speech, is “tied closely to the details of language structure (grammar),” and “deals with meaning in social, cultural, and political terms” (p. ix). The primary focus of my analysis was the relevant details of speech in my participant interviews and the implications and meaning behind these details of speech. In his book *How to do a Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit*, Gee (2011) offers 27 tools for conducting a discourse analysis. He defines a discourse analysis tool as “a specific question to ask of data” (p. x). Although it is not realistic to incorporate all 27 of these tools into a study of this size, I used six of these tools to help

analyze my interview data, all of which will be applied in more detail in later chapters. Of the 27 tools provided by Gee (2011), these six tools were selected as they assisted in my focus on participant speech patterns in relation to diversity, race, and whiteness, while connecting to my two research questions. The tools also helped me to examine how participants' use of diversity talk, particularly around whiteness, acted as a discursive strategy for maintaining whiteness as normative and neutral. Moreover, these six tools were particularly suited to my research as they encompass both the big D and little d discourses that I aimed to bring attention to in regards to diversity in the Ontario education system. As stated by Gee (2011), these six tools include:

1. The Doing and Not Just Saying Tool (Tool #7): Because language is used for different functions and not just to convey information, which is but one of its functions, it is always useful to ask of any communication: What is the speaker trying to DO and not just what is the speaker trying to SAY? (p. 42)
2. The Why This Way and Not That Way Tool (Tool #9): For any communication, ask why the speaker built and designed with grammar in the way in which he or she did and not in some other way. Always ask how else this could have been said and what the speaker is trying to mean and do by saying it the way in which he or she did, and not in other ways (p. 55)
3. The Significance Building Tool (Tool #14): For any communication, ask how words and grammatical devices are being used to build up or lessen significance (importance, relevance) for certain things and not others (p. 92)
4. The Identities Building Tool (Tool #16): For any communication, ask what socially recognizable identity or identities the speaker is trying to enact or to



get others to recognize. Ask also how the speaker's language treats other people's identities, what sorts of identities the speaker recognizes for others in relationship to his or her own. Ask, too, how the speaker is positioning others, what identities the speaker is "inviting" them to take up (p. 110)

5. The Connections Building Tool (Tool #19): For any communication, ask how the words and grammar being used in the communication connect or disconnect things or ignore connections between things. Always ask, as well, how the words and grammar being used in a communication make things relevant or irrelevant to other things, or ignore their relevance to each other (p. 126)
6. The Big 'D' Discourse Tool (Tool #27): For any communication, ask how the person is using language, as well as ways of acting, interacting, believing, valuing, dressing, and using various objects, tools, and technologies in certain sorts of environments to exact a specific socially recognizable identity and engage in one or more socially recognizable activities (p. 181)

Each of these six tools played an important role in the analysis and findings of this study. They influenced the interview schedule and framed my discussion of the main findings and themes. Yet, as with any methodological framework, there are potential limitations to a CDA, particularly concerning ethical considerations. The issue has been raised by many researchers of conducting interviews for the purpose of a discourse analysis, as they are generally designed to "obtain a sample of the discursive practices that they employ, with a view of studying the nature of these and how they function" (Hammersly, 2013, p. 532). Despite this change in goals for a discourse analysis

interview, participants are typically not informed that the focus of the interview concerns the details of speech that they use in the interview (Hammersly, 2013). This suggests data are collected through deceit. In order to insure this was not the case, participants were made aware of the focus on CDA through the title and description of the study provided in both the letter of invitation and letter of consent provided to the participants.

### **Site and Participant Selection**

Data were collected from new teachers who have graduated from an Ontario teacher education program within the last 5 years. This timeline aligns with the *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* document that was mandated in 2009 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). In this document, the Ontario Ministry of Education states their aim to help “achieve an equitable and inclusive school climate” where “all students, parents, and other members of the school community are welcomed and respected” (p. 10). Thus, this timeline for participants necessitates the most recent experiences in teacher education regarding diversity. I used purposive, homogenous sampling to select seven participants who reside in Ontario. Although sample size varies among qualitative studies, Creswell (2005) asserts that it is not uncommon for qualitative research to involve only a small number of participants in order to provide a more in-depth exploration and analysis of the topic at hand. Moreover, Creswell (2005) states that “in purposive sampling researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 204). Hence, to explore the Ontario context, I selected teacher education graduates who live and who have taught in Ontario. As well, homogenous sampling occurs when “the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics” (Creswell,

2005, p. 206). Therefore, in order to have more in-depth conversations about diversity and classroom related experiences, I intentionally selected educators who are on the occasional teaching list for an Ontario school board or have/had a contract for a temporary or permanent teaching position, and who have at least 1 year of teaching experience in Ontario. The primary objective was to also interview white teachers, as to align with my interests in exploring the issue of whiteness in teacher education and white teachers' experiences and views of diversity as members of the dominant group. However, I interviewed any Ontario teacher who met the outlined criteria to participate. This was to ensure that I was not limiting voices of other teachers, yet it was also valuable to see who self-selected to participate in this study. Despite this, all seven participants identified as white.

The main site for recruiting participants was at the postsecondary institution that I attend. To find participants who fit the above criteria, I made use of a gatekeeper at this site. Creswell (2005) defines a gatekeeper as "an individual who has an official or unofficial role at the site, provides entrance to a site, helps researchers locate people, and assists in the identification of places to study" (p. 209). The institution where I conducted my research has a large graduate program with a focus on education and children and youth, with many graduate students, including myself, holding a Bachelor of Education degree and being a qualified teacher. Thus, I contacted the necessary individuals in the graduate program to inquire about receiving assistance in obtaining potential participants in the Master of Education and Master of Arts program. During my inquiry, I provided documentation that displayed my Research Ethics Board clearance and a formal letter of invitation for potential participants that clearly articulated the purpose of my research and

the necessary requirements to participate. As well, I created and displayed (with the permission of the university and in alignment with campus policy) recruitment flyers throughout the institution that included contact information if an individual would like to potentially participate in the study.

As a second method of recruitment, I used snowball sampling. This form of sampling involved contacting individuals who have the necessary criteria for the study who can be used as informants to identify and recommend other participants (Creswell, 2005). This method allowed me to broaden my recruitment to qualified teachers outside of graduate programs at the postsecondary institution I attend. I contacted my informants and potential participants via e-mail, which included a formal letter of invitation and letter of consent.

### **White Researcher: An Insider/Outsider Perspective**

It is important, in particular, to address my position as the researcher. As Caelli, Ray, and Mill (2003) state, “a researcher’s motives for engaging with a particular study topic are never a naïve choice” (p. 9). Indeed, the reasons for this research inquiry stemmed from my own motives, passions, and experiences and my perspective and position played a role in the study. There was a possibility of interviewing both white and marginalized educators, both of which raise different dynamics and quandaries for me as a white researcher. Yet, it was my primary objective to interview white educators. As a white educator interviewing fellow white teachers, I approached my research as an “insider.” But although I am a white educator like my participants, a methodological assumption I hold is that I have a different awareness and belief about whiteness than most educators based on my particular education and areas of interest. This

methodological assumption is supported by research that suggests that possessing white privilege tends to hinder people of the dominant group from recognizing their whiteness, especially when it is infrequently discussed on a critical level within schools (Frankenberg, 1997; Matias & Allen, 2013; McIntosh, 1990; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Solomon et al., 2005). Yet, by trying to remain neutral in my conversations with my participants, I hoped and expected to create a sense of comfort for the participants about opening up and discussing the topics of race and whiteness. Gallagher (2000) stresses that “researchers studying whiteness and the various meanings, expressions, and emotions whites attach to their racial position need to reexamine the insider/outsider dilemma” which often surfaces when examining something as sensitive as race, whiteness, and identity (p. 75). Given my review of the literature and research on whiteness, I predicted that my white participants would be less comfortable discussing matters of race and whiteness if I as the researcher were not white, with a fear of offending the researcher or being seen as racist increasing in this case (Levine-Rasky, 2000; Solomon et al., 2005; Tilley & Taylor, 2012). Thus, I believed that my racial identity would play a positive role in the interviews with my participants, yet I did recognize the dilemmas that are attached to discussing such taboo, difficult topics no matter how one is racialized.

I also had to consider the potential limitations of my position as a white researcher focusing on issues of whiteness and privilege. Gallagher (2000) discusses some of the potential issues that can arise in this situation, stating that “researchers examining whiteness can be unintentionally (or intentionally) manipulated into racism by embracing a set of “commonsense” assumptions about white racial attitudes which guide their research” (p. 75). Hence, I was particularly reflective and conscious about my analysis

and discussion surrounding the participants and their discourses of diversity, whiteness, and privilege, not wanting to be influenced by “commonplace” assumptions. Instead, I approached whiteness as more than a monolithic identity, but as a complex and multifaceted one that is influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.

### **Data Collection**

I acquired written consent from my participants to conduct one-on-one semistructured interviews. Each participant partook in a one-on-one semistructured interview that was audio recorded and took approximately 60 minutes. As Opie (2004) highlights, the purpose of the one-on-one interview is to “encourage respondents to say what they think and to do so with greater richness and spontaneity” (p. 112). As well, a semistructured approach to the interview allowed for flexibility in the conversation and “for a depth of feeling to be ascertained by providing opportunities to probe and expand the interviewee’s responses” (Opie, 2004, p. 118). Thus, the flexibility of the semistructured interview allowed me to adjust and create questions during the interview depending on a participant’s response and the flow of the conversation. I also included probing questions in my interview schedule in order to go more in depth in the discussion. Moreover, in recognition of Turner’s (2010) suggestions for conducting interviews, I aimed to be as neutral as possible and provided questions that allowed the participant to voice his or her experiences, opinions, and beliefs. Due to the sensitivity that often comes with discussing the topics of race and whiteness, the ability to remain neutral while creating a welcoming, relaxing atmosphere for the participant was particularly important. As Gallagher (2000) asserts, “in order for whiteness to be demystified and stripped to its political essence, our interviews must generate counter

narratives of whiteness which give respondents the opportunity to rethink the white scripts” (p. 68). I hoped to provide a similar space for my participants, where they could safely explore and question their feelings and ideas about race and whiteness. Yet I also recognize that everyone has discourse(s), meaning distinct ways in which they talk, think, and act in different situations (Gee, 2005). Thus, despite trying to remain neutral during the interviews, my discourse as a white, antiracist researcher who acknowledges and critiques whiteness within myself, the Ontario education system, and the broader society, could have influenced my participants in other ways, as my use of language and the questions I asked could have had an effect, whether positive or negative, on the research process and the participants’ diversity talk.

My interview schedule consisted of a variety of questions pertaining to diversity, race, whiteness, teacher education, and classroom experiences (see Appendix). The interview schedule was a self-developed instrument informed by my research questions and the theoretical frameworks for my study, which is demonstrated in Table 1. As indicated in Table 1, each core interview question is directly related to at least one of my two research questions. Beside both of my research questions are codes (i.e. 5, 6, 7, etc.) that refer to a specific interview question within my interview schedule.

### **Data Analysis**

After each interview had been completed, I transcribed and analyzed each individual transcript electronically. I used what Creswell (1998) calls “the data analysis spiral,” adhering to the following process:

1. Organize the data.
2. Create notes and beginning to cluster segments into possible categories.

3. Identify prominent categories or themes and subthemes and classify data under these themes.
4. Present the data by describing relationships among the data and summarize findings.

Although a long and at times tedious process, transcription is a crucial stage of qualitative inquiry (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). To align with a CDA methodological approach, during the transcription process I focused on the grammar and speech patterns of the participants as they discussed their experiences and ideas around race, whiteness, diversity, and teacher education. For instance, pauses and speech disfluencies, like “um” and “ah,” were included in each of the seven participant transcripts as they were seen as valuable indicators of the complexities and tensions that surround diversity issues. Gee’s (2011) six tools that were selected for the study were also used during the data analysis process. The tools themselves were not themes during the coding process, for example, but were used as a way to form my analysis of the prominent themes that did emerge. By involving these CDA tools, the intent was to focus on the ways in which the interviewees spoke about race, whiteness, and diversity in relation to big D and little d discourse. As well, these six tools were used to help highlight and answer the two research questions I set out. Yet, it is important to also highlight that the data analysis process in qualitative research is still very much interpretative; thus, data analysis is “more of a reflexive, reactive interaction between the researcher and the decontextualized data that are already interpretations of a social encounter” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 282). Hence, the aim of this process for me, as the researcher, was to effectively decipher and make



sense of the data in order to gain a greater understanding of the discourses of diversity of new teachers who I studied (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

### **Methodological Assumptions**

There were several methodological assumptions made in regards to the participants and the topic of study for this research. First, it was assumed that the participants had some interest in talking about diversity by having agreed to participate in the study, although this interest will vary from participant to participant. In relation to this, it was also assumed that discussion of diversity was related to race in this context. Although diversity encompasses many things, in this study the main focus was racial diversity. This does not imply that participants only discussed and defined diversity in race-related terms, yet the interview and the subsequent data are heavily based on the issue of race, racism, and whiteness. Moreover, based on the criteria for participation in this study, it was assumed that the participants had the necessary experience in the classroom to engage in an in depth discussion about these topics, whether it be practicum placements, occasional teaching work, or a full-time position.

### **Limitations**

One potential limitation of this study is my small sample size, with only seven educators participating. Having more participants could have undoubtedly added to my analysis and strengthened my results. However, qualitative research ranges in sample sizes with there being no right or wrong answer when it comes to the number of participants (Creswell, 2005). The small sample size for this study reflects the aim for practicality and richness, with “the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminish[ing] with the addition of each new individual” (Creswell, 2005, p. 207).

Table 1

*Research Questions in Relation to Interview Questions*

Research Question	Interview Question
(1) What is/are the discourse(s) surrounding diversity, more specifically whiteness, among teacher education graduates?	5, 6, 7, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
(2) How do recent teacher education graduates/new teachers connect their perceptions of diversity, specifically whiteness, to courses they took in their teacher education program?	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14,

A second possible limitation is my prominent focus on race and whiteness, which accounts for only one of the many aspects of a person's identity and only one facet of diversity. Yet, as already mentioned, I recognize the complexity of both one's identity and of the discourses of diversity that exist in and outside of the classroom. Moreover, it would have been unrealistic and difficult to include every possible perspective or voice. For the sake of engaging in meaningful and credible research, I had to narrow my focus. Focusing predominately on race posits another potential limitation, as it often creates discomfort for the speaker when asked to discuss issues of race, racism, and whiteness (Leonardo, 2004; Solomon et al., 2005; Taylor & Tilley, 2013). This discomfort may at times have limited the participant's willingness or ability to openly discuss these topics, but I would argue that this too is valuable data and is telling of how the topic of race is seen as taboo in Canadian society. Nonetheless, creating a rapport with my participants was important in order to create some level of comfort for them. Yet, I recognize that I only had a small amount of time to do so due to only meeting with them once for the one-on-one interview. This may have impacted the quality and depth of their responses, on top of their comfort (or lack thereof) in discussing topics and experiences related to race. Due to this, I tried to remain neutral during the interview and attempted to create a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere for the conversation to take place. To further try and minimize this possible limitation, I ensured participants were aware of the opportunity to review their interview transcript and make any changes if they so desired.

### **Establishing Credibility**

Several procedures were put in place to ensure the credibility of my research. Firstly, I engaged in the process of member checking. Creswell (2005) defines member

checking as the “process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account” (p. 252). Once the interview had been transcribed into text format, I provided a copy of the interview transcript to the participant to review. The participant was asked to read the interview transcript and make any necessary changes. Participants could add, delete, or alter any part of the transcript that they desired. This helped ensure that the analysis of the data was fair, accurate, and realistic (Creswell, 2005).

Second, I displayed my research using thick description. This involved describing my research “in sufficiently rich, ‘thick’ detail that readers can draw their own conclusions from” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 106). As well, I gained feedback from academics in the field of education who could affirm that my interpretations were appropriate and valid (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

Lastly, I developed and maintained a research audit trail throughout the process of my research. An audit trail “document[s] the course of development of the completed analysis” by providing “an account of all research decisions and activities throughout the study” (Carcary, 2009, p. 15). To do so, I retained a log of all of my research activities, including all raw data, transcription and coding documents, and research notes (Carcary, 2009). This made the research transparent and created a sense of trustworthiness, which is particularly important in qualitative research where interpretation plays an important role in the analysis.

### **Ethical Considerations**

As I used human participants for my research, I received clearance (file #14-089) from my institution’s Research Ethics Board to ensure thorough attention to the rights

and protections of the participants. It was not until I received ethics clearance that I began my recruitment of participants and data collection. There were no foreseen physical, psychological, or social risks associated with participating with the research.

Nonetheless, all participants in the study had to willingly volunteer to participate and signed a consent form. Every participant was informed of the nature of the study and his or her right to withdraw from the study. At the beginning of the interview, I verbally ensured that the participant was aware of this right. As well, the participant was informed that he or she did not have to answer any question that they felt was inappropriate, invasive, or demeaning. This was also included in the written consent form provided to the participant at the beginning of the research study. To further eliminate any risk, the interview schedule was worded and chosen carefully to eliminate any embarrassment, insult, or anxiety. There were no consequences on the part of the participant for withdrawing from the research study. If the participant did choose to withdraw from the study at any time, the participant's data would have been deleted from any technological software and any paper documents would have been shredded. Member checking was also used to ensure the participant was comfortable with the interview script and what would be put forth in my research.

During the course of the research, personal identifiers were collected. These personal identifiers were secured in various ways. The participant's name was secured by using a pseudonym during any discussion or analysis of the data and was not recorded on any of the written documents regarding the study. Where participants completed their teacher education was secured by simply not naming the specific institution, just the general geographic location (e.g., in Southern Ontario). The teaching credentials of the

participant was not hidden, as this is not seen as a specific identifier that would reveal a person's identity, especially when all other identifiers were secured for the purpose of the participant's confidentiality.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the methodology and research design of the study. I outlined the use of CDA as methodology, site and participant selection, data collections and analysis procedures, assumptions and limitations, and ethical considerations. This chapter also examined the importance of establishing credibility and the insider/outsider perspective I took as a white researcher interviewing white participants. The following chapter will provide a presentation of the study's results.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This study investigated how newly qualified educators understood diversity, specifically whiteness, and how they connected these perceptions to their experiences in courses they took in their teacher education program. Two questions guided this research:

1. What is/are the discourse(s) surrounding diversity, more specifically whiteness, among teacher education graduates?
2. How do recent teacher education graduates/new teachers connect their perceptions of diversity, specifically whiteness, to courses they took in their teacher education program?

To help answer these questions, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used as a methodological framework. In particular, six of Gee's (2011) CDA tools were applied to the data collection and analysis process. The six tools selected helped shape the interviews that took place with newly qualified educators, guiding the questions that were asked in the interview schedule, and later helped form the data analysis. They also were applied to the findings and helped frame the discussion of the prominent themes that emerged. Through purposive, homogeneous sampling, seven educators were selected to participate in the study. A one-on-one semistructured interview was conducted with each participant that focused on questions surrounding diversity, race, whiteness, teacher education, and classroom experience. Each transcript was then transcribed, coded, and analyzed.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed presentation of results that emerged from the coding and analysis process. Results are displayed through five overarching themes: (a) diversity in theory and in practice, (b) the influence of the larger

Canadian discourse, (c) teacher education and the need for change, (d) race and the white educator, and (e) the difficulty of whiteness.

### **Participants**

Seven new Ontario teachers participated in this qualitative study. Table 2 displays basic demographic information for each participant. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect the participants' identities and all other identifiers were secured for the purpose of confidentiality. Information provided is based upon when data collection was conducted in early 2015. To be eligible to participate in this study, potential participants had to have graduated from an Ontario teacher education program within the last 5 years and have at least 1 year of teaching experience in Ontario. All but one participant (Deanna) fit this criterion, with Deanna having graduated from a teacher education program outside of Ontario over 5 years ago. Despite this, all of her teaching experience has been in Ontario. The other six participants all attended the same teacher education program in Southern Ontario but at varying years of study and teaching divisions. All participants identified as white, yet this was not a requirement to participate in the study. Participant teaching experience ranged from occasional teaching, long-term occasional work, to permanent teaching in both the public and private education sectors.

### **Diversity in Theory and in Practice**

With diversity being a rather broad and ambiguous term, it can be defined in various ways and with various foci. It is also not uncommon for people of the dominant group to define and see diversity in an uncritical, idealistic manner (Bell & Hartmann, 2007). Thus, it was important to the research to see how the participants defined diversity and how they used the term throughout the interview in relation to their classroom



Table 2

*Overview of Participants*

Pseudonym	Gender	Year of Graduation	Teaching Qualifications	Teaching Experience
Anthony	Male	2013	Intermediate/Senior	1 year
Deanna	Female	2008	Intermediate/Senior	5 years
Julie	Female	2012	Junior/Intermediate	2 years
Amber	Female	2014	Junior/Intermediate	Almost 1 year
Haley	Female	2012	Junior/Intermediate	2 years
Sarah	Female	2011	Junior/Intermediate	3 years
Emily	Female	2013	Primary/Junior	2 years

experiences.

### **Definitions of Diversity**

At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to describe their understanding(s) of diversity, both in general and within the classroom. Many participants defined diversity in terms of social identifiers, such as race, religion, and socioeconomic status. Sarah touched on the various social aspects of diversity in her definition, believing that diversity “could be your culture, your ethnicity, your skin colour, your religion, your gender, your sexual orientation” and that “all those little parts that make up a person, that make you different, that make you unique, I would consider diversity.” Emily had a similar understanding, describing diversity as “a mixture of different diversities.” She went on to state that diversity “could be of race, ethnicity, culture, it could go as far as sex, as income, so SES. It could be anything that defines a person or is part of their personality.” Haley provided a detailed understanding of diversity, specifically in relation to the classroom setting, mentioning diversity in terms of socioeconomic status, learning needs, culture, religion, and mental health. She also acknowledged that, “diversity isn’t always necessarily something you can outright see.” Amber related her definition of diversity directly to culture, stating that diversity was “having lots of different backgrounds and cultures and stuff in kind of one area.”

Ideas of individuality, uniqueness, and acceptance were a common thread throughout the participants’ understandings of diversity. This can be seen in Julie’s description of diversity:

I would say that diversity to me is really understanding and valuing and accepting differences that people have. It could look like something such as race or identity,

however I think it's also more of a broader term than that and that everybody is a unique person and that even if two people are and have the same background, they're still individuals.

Similarly, when asked to describe her understanding of diversity, Deanna outlined:

Well everyone is different and that's what makes us unique. And it doesn't necessarily matter, you know, where you're from, what colour you are. Everyone is different, everybody's unique in the way that we're brought up and the way you are is what you contribute to society.

Although Anthony similarly understood diversity to reflect that "not only are people different, but that's actually what makes them great." he also acknowledged that diversity is more than simply difference among individuals. For example, he added that "there's diversity among people and there's diversity among content, among media, among all sorts of... interactions with society." Yet, he was the only participant to define diversity as more than just human diversity and the social identifiers that set people apart from one another.

### **Diversity in the Classroom**

After discussing their general understandings of diversity, participants were then asked to discuss what a diverse classroom meant to them. All of the participants carried over their previously answered definitions of diversity, believing a diverse classroom to be one with students of different races, sexualities, religions, etcetera, but also one with different learning abilities and needs. For example, Deanna stated that a diverse classroom consisted of "acceptance, creating a safe comfortable environment, everyone is equal and it doesn't matter if you're an academic student or an applied student or an

essential student.” Touching on various student needs, Julie highlighted that a diverse classroom means taking “into consideration the unique needs of each student.” She went on to say that “it’s really important to realize that all the kids are different.” Sarah noted that along with diversity in culture and gender, a diverse classroom could also include “children with varying needs, whether that’s special needs, like a kid with autism or whether that is a kid with physical disabilities.”

A couple of participants grappled with the notion of a diverse classroom, questioning whether or not there is such a thing as a nondiverse classroom. Anthony concluded:

Every classroom in the history of the world ever has been diverse. Perhaps it might not have one type of diversity in it, you’re right, perhaps all of my students are able-bodied, perhaps all of my students are caucasian, or they might be this, but there’s always differences.

Similarly, Haley highlighted that “most” of the classrooms she has taught in “have been diverse in many kind of different ways.” She went on to say that “every classroom ... is diverse in its own way.”

With this discussion about diverse classrooms, participants were asked to discuss the potential benefits of teaching a diverse classroom. Their answers were dependent on their own definitions of diversity and diverse classrooms and, thus, their answers varied. Yet, there was a commonality among many answers in regards to seeing the advantage of students being exposed to different worldviews and ways of life. When looking at some advantages of a diverse classroom, Julie stated:

I would say that the pros would definitely be exposing students to diversity. I think that's really important in helping them realize when they're young that it's really important to celebrate people's differences, not just accept them but really embrace that that's who people are and, especially at a young age, that the world is not just about you or doesn't only look like what you think it looks like, which is a hard concept for them.

Emily stated that diversity makes the classroom "more rich" as "we have more to learn from, we have more to celebrate, and we have more viewpoints." Similarly, Amber saw a positive being the "different perspectives" brought into the classroom, suggesting that "students who like come from different backgrounds and stuff like that can bring different perspectives into the classroom which I think is really good." Sarah had a similar response, highlighting:

Pros of having a diverse classroom is that children have the opportunity to get to understand other ways of life, whether that's different types of families, whether that is different religions or different cultures, maybe what different cultures eat for Christmas or around Christmas time or Hanukkah.

She continued by stating that "by exposing them to different types of diversity and being able to talk about it and being able to experience it, you are growing a more tolerant human, you're teaching a more tolerant human."

Despite all of the participants commenting on the advantages of having a diverse classroom and teachers incorporating diversity into the classroom, three participants (Deanna, Amber, and Haley) could not recall teaching a lesson that incorporated some form of diversity. Yet, Haley stated that despite not necessarily teaching a lesson on

diversity, “there are moments when discussions come up.” She explained that “when you’re teaching Math and you’re dealing with numbers all the time or you’re teaching Science and you’re talking about cells and systems and fluids, it’s a little more difficult.” Despite this, she tries to “latch on to those moments when [diversity issues] come up” because “diversity is everywhere and it’s okay to have those conversations, even if it’s in Math class.” Other participants mentioned the importance of taking advantage of those teachable moments as well, even if it is not a lesson being taught directly regarding some aspect of diversity. Julie mentioned that discussions of diversity often just “come up informally a lot of times” in her classroom. She continued by highlighting:

Especially when kids have questions, they just tend to ask them so I find I don’t really need to, I don’t know, explicitly ask each kid to share their background or their history or their story with me. They just kind of share what they do, what they want to share, and we move forward from that I guess.

Anthony mentioned the often informal discussions of diversity that arise as well, stating, “if it matters and it’s getting in the way of my kids learning, yes I want to discuss it. I want it to be heard.”

The other four participants discussed some diversity lessons that they taught, predominately around cultural diversity. For example, Emily outlined her lessons on different holiday traditions around the world: “So say at Christmas time we did Christmas around the world, so we looked at all the different ones.” Julie, who is currently teaching in a primary classroom, noted her lessons on diversity and how she incorporates her own experiences of travelling to Africa, claiming, “I usually talk about my own experiences in Chad as like an introduction. I bring in the food and I dress up and the kids all love it.”

### **The Influence of the Larger Canadian Discourse**

The connection to Canadian society and the dominant discourse of acceptance and multiculturalism was present in the participants' discussions around diversity. In particular, Canada's national identity (or lack thereof) and the comparison to the American melting pot helped shape how the participants talked, or did not talk, about diversity.

#### **National Identity**

As much of the literature suggests, the Canadian national identity is complex (Leung, 2011; Raney, 2009). Many of the participants touched on this fact, noting that it is hard to pinpoint precisely what Canada's identity is in part because of our diverse population. Anthony stated, "Canada has a lot of national identities and that's the important point. We just can't make up our mind on any of them." When asked what she thought Canada's national identity was, Haley replied, "I feel like our national identity is pretty vague in the sense that there are so many different identities that make up Canada." Amber got at this as well when she responded, "I think it's a combination of lots of different things. I think people stereotype us as being like in igloos, hunting beavers but like I don't think that there's like anything in particular like this person is Canadian."

Despite many of the participants believing Canada does not have a clear national identity, the same words were used among all of the educators to describe Canada in a more general sense, such as "accepting," "diverse," and "multicultural." Deanna discussed her opinion of Canada, stating that, "we are very accepting. We are multicultural, which is awesome when it comes to learning about students and how they

learn.” She went on to say, “We just accept everyone, which is fantastic.” Julie has similar sentiments when she stated:

we are so welcoming and take everyone in and that’s part of what our identity is, is that we’ll be accepting of anyone and everyone kind of regardless of where they come from or their back story or anything like that.

Haley discussed the privilege people in Canada have in regards to accessibility to health care and education and also addressed notions of acceptance and multiculturalism surrounding the Canadian identity:

We’re pretty accepting of people no matter what like their cultural background is or religious background, like whatever it might be I feel like we’re a pretty accepting society in that sense. And probably, this is like cliché, but like our kindness and generosity.

### **Mosaic versus Melting Pot**

Notions of acceptance to describe Canada were also commonly used by participants to make comparisons to Canada’s American neighbour. For example, Emily was presumably making a reference to the United States when she stated:

In other countries it’s more of melting pots, saying that when you come here well you have to be just like us, whereas here I feel like we’re a little bit more open to keep your country and your culture and where you came from.

Other participants were more direct in their comparison, such as Anthony who declared that, “Canada’s more of a mosaic model as opposed to the American’s melting pot.” Yet, Anthony is also critical of this comparison, stating, “I have a feeling asking someone a



little more ethnic than myself may come to a different conclusion.” He is also critical of this comparison when it comes to racism:

The fact that Canada looks at the U.S and says that if you are African American in the U.S - obviously if you’re going to be African American then the U.S - you are more likely to be in prison at some point in your life than to graduate from college. And I think Canada looks at that and thinks ‘ha ha, that’s not true for ours,’ even though I have a feeling our statistics aren’t that much better.

Unlike Anthony, most participants were uncritical when it came to comparing Canada to other countries in regards to acceptance and diversity. For example, when asked about racism in Canada, Haley stated, “I feel like there’s definitely like racial tension in Canada but I think that it’s probably less prevalent than it would be in the United States.”

### **Teacher Education and the Need for Change**

Throughout the interview process, participants were asked to discuss their experiences and learning in their teacher education program. Through discussing their practicums, courses, and overall experiences in their program, it became evident that there was a lack of meaningful content, if any, surrounding diversity in their teacher education program. This was particularly true in regards to issues surrounding race and whiteness, reflecting the recent literature (Bedard, 2000; Chapman, 2013; Picower, 2009; Taylor & Tilley, 2013). In connection to this limited discussion on diversity was a clear need for more support in regards to these issues, with some of the participants clearly stating a desire and/or need for additional support in their interview.

### **Lack of Critical Content**

The participants discussed their experiences in teacher education and the learning that took place in both their courses and practicum placements. When asked about what they learned in terms of diversity, several participants struggled to think of any topics or courses in teacher education that connected to the topic of diversity. For example, Anthony remembered learning about diversity in a few of his undergraduate courses, yet not in his teacher education program:

During my teacher education year, so my fifth year of my concurrent degree, we didn't really talk about it. We, there were allusions to it, there were... we didn't talk about race. We didn't talk about gender. We spoke about ableism and exceptionality. Those are the ones we discussed. We did that in Special Education and I found Special Education to be a valuable start but perhaps not far enough in order for them to be prepared.

Anthony continued by stating, "I think the best advice I got in the teacher education program was to have the discussion delicately. It's not wrong; we should probably have this conversation delicately, but nothing really about how to deal with it." Deanna, the only participant to not attend teacher education at the same Southern Ontario university, stated, "I actually don't know if I took any classes where it was specific in diversity." When asked if there was any learning about diversity that could be applied to her classroom experiences, Amber replied, "No not really. Not that I can think of. I'm trying to rack my brain but I'm pretty sure there was nothing." Amber added, "I'm trying to think... I mean they talk about it in some of the classes. Like Language they'll be like, 'these are multicultural books that you can use.' Yeah but like nothing in super detail."

Similarly, when asked what prepared her in teacher education to deal with and discuss issues of diversity, Emily responded, “I would say there really wasn’t much at all. Like I said, there was the one class with one project. As well, there was special education.” The project Emily is referring to is a duo-ethnography assignment where teacher candidates pair up to discuss their different worldviews, experiences, and pedagogies. This is coincidentally a project that several of the other participants discussed as well when asked about teacher education assignments and discussions that incorporated diversity. For example, Amber mentioned the assignment, stating that, “we had to talk to another person and talk about what affects us as a teacher in regards to like diversity and like our past experiences and how it’s going to affect us.” Haley too remembered that, “you had to like interview one of your peers and talk about your different backgrounds and your different experiences.” Haley continued by stating:

I thought that was really great because I felt that really took an emphasis away from like when you look at a person you see their diversity and actually getting to know a person and how different their experiences are. So I feel like that was like a huge eye opener.

Haley went on to say, “but yeah, other than that nothing really stands out” in regards to what she learned regarding diversity in her teacher education program. But examples beyond this duo-ethnography assignment were limited. Julie mentioned a course that she thought incorporated diversity, stating:

It focused a lot on kind of like the child as a whole learner and different methods for teaching the student based on, I don’t know, meeting their own needs while trying to keep in mind you are teaching a standardized curriculum.

But when asked if she found the course beneficial, she stated, “Not really because I found that a lot of it was – I don’t know, I wouldn’t say that it wasn’t useful but it there just was no practical tie in with that course for me at the time.” She also mentioned the value of her cohort group:

I think that our cohort group was a really helpful place for me to I guess hear other peoples’ stories and learn about different people’s experiences and what they have experienced in their own life and in their own classrooms.

Despite the few examples provided by some of the participants, it seems that diversity was not a prominent discussion in the teacher education programs that the participants attended, particularly regarding race and whiteness. When diversity was discussed, it often did not go beyond surface level ideas of inclusion and tolerance. Sarah discussed this, stating:

They definitely prepared me for teaching me the importance of diversity, teaching me different ways to implement it, different ways to talk about diversity in a respectful way. But in terms of talking about that other side – like they talked about the positives all the time, which is great, but not everybody is going to be on the same page and so it’s been difficult dealing with the parents, the students, and to some extent some teachers who don’t really believe in the same things that you’re trying to teach.

She also discussed the lack of discussion regarding race and the difference between the student and teacher population:

Teachers college didn’t really talk about the fact that... that we are, ‘we’ being white middle class females, are like trying to teach these kids that, like we are

teaching a population that we don't represent necessarily and because of that it is a little more difficult because the students don't see us as having the same experiences as them and I think sometimes they feel like they can't relate necessarily.

Several participants also noted a homogenous student population, in regards to various social identifiers, in their practicum placements in teacher education. For example, Amber stated that "where my practicums were, it was very like not multicultural at all." Anthony more overtly commented that "my practicum was in the whitest place in the world." Sarah discussed an issue that arose in her practicum because of this lack of diversity:

The problem that I had was a lot of my classrooms, like in my teaching practicum, I felt that my practicum teacher, they weren't as comfortable with it or I didn't have a very diverse classroom. And so I find that it, not that it's impossible but I just find it harder to talk about because it doesn't have the same impact because the kids they haven't experienced anything, they haven't experienced people of other cultures or people with special needs or people of different religions. So it doesn't have the same impact.

In contrast, Julie explained why discussions on white privilege did not resonate with her, as opposed to her students, as a white educator:

I wonder if it's just because of the communities I've grown up in and the fact that I don't teach a very diverse, like in the whiteness sense of the word, group of kids. And so it's not something I really had to focus on while I was in teachers college. I feel like if I had maybe done teachers college at a school where I would see a lot

more diversity or a lot of more difference of cultures and backgrounds then I think it would've stuck with me a lot more.

For many participants, they were not confronted with issues of diversity until they entered the teaching profession.

### **The Need for More Support**

The participants discussed in detail their transition from teacher education to the classroom as new teachers. For most participants, there was a common declaration that they felt unprepared to deal with various issues and experiences surrounding diversity.

Haley was particularly vocal about this, stating:

Well I feel like teachers college did not prepare me for what it was like to be a teacher and to be thrown into all these different types of scenarios. Like I said, dealing with mental health issues and dealing with cultural and religious differences and just having all of these things thrown at me, I feel like there could've been a lot more preparation about mental health issues and just so much, so so so much.

She continued by highlighting the pressure as a new teacher to meet the needs of her diverse students:

I feel like that's a lot of weight to put on a teacher, especially if you haven't had training to work with students who are going through like, I don't know, like they're having issues with their cultural background, or their religious background, or if they are like coming out as being gay, lesbian, or bisexual. I just feel like I haven't had enough experience or training in those different aspects for

me to properly support them so I think it's important to reach out and see what it is you can do.

Haley discussed her experience as a new teacher with a wide array of diverse students with diverse needs, including refugee students and students struggling with their identity. Although passionate about supporting them, she stated:

I feel like it's a huge challenge and there's no necessarily right or wrong way to do it and there's no way that's been laid out for you but I feel like that is something that is a challenge and it needs to be more addressed during teachers college for sure.

Sarah too declared, "I feel that a lot of things that I have had to do in teaching I wasn't prepared for." When asked if there was anything that was difficult to learn in regard to diversity in her teacher education program, she then replied:

Like I said, nothing that was difficult. It was just the lack of... the lack of knowledge, the lack of teaching on how to deal with people who don't agree with what you're teaching and like how to deal with that.

Amber has similar sentiments, stating:

I think for the most part it prepared me but there's some stuff that like I wish I could've learned about more, like multicultural and diversity and special education and stuff like that cause like they don't really prepare you.

Anthony focused on the need for more support in regards to gender issues, stating:

I wish we spoke more and we addressed teachers' role in combatting conflicts of gender and... gender based violence and all the other elements that teachers can play in modeling how this is wrong, and explaining how it perpetuates our current

rape culture. There's definitely room for improvement, there is more to be discussed, there's more to learn, and it wasn't discussed.

He also discussed importance of putting together the importance of diversity for yourself, yet highlighted:

I do however wish [teacher education] was a little bit more explicit. I think that a lot of people could benefit from less Meta and more obvious examples of it. I think ... I think a diversity training would be welcome.

Emily suggested that on top of providing more practical elements to teacher education, such as organizing a classroom and creating unit plans, to have a bigger focus on “just the fact of diversity and how to have inclusiveness within your classroom, how to deal with it. I think that's a big part that needs to be included.” She continued specifically about the importance of learning about white privilege, particularly considering that the demographics of her program were “white females:”

The fact that I only learned about say white privilege in an elective class is a big deal. So I think that needs to be put in as well, that that needs to be a part of teachers college and not just something you get if you choose to.

### **Race and the White Educator**

With racial diversity being a particular focus of this study, it was important to explore how participants situated themselves as racial beings, as well as their ideas and experiences with race and racism.

#### **Racial Identity**

All seven participants identified as white, yet some more easily identified as white than others. When asked to describe her feelings and beliefs about her racial identity,



Emily was quick to identify as white, but also stated, “I feel like a lot of people have the idea of thinking oh I’m just white, I have no culture, when white is culture in itself.”

Emily mentioned that “my family is Hungarian, so we do have our own culture within that as well,” making a connection to her ethnicity as well as her white identity. Julie too is quick to identify as white, stating that she is a “white female” but also included her religion, gender, marital status, and family make-up when describing her racial identity.

Some participants used ethnicity to describe their racial identity, identifying more with their ethnicity than their race. For example, when asked about her racial identity, Deanna declared:

Um... personally I think I identify... so I’m Italian and Spanish. My dad’s side of the family is all Italian. Both of my parents were born in Uruguay. So, we were raised in an environment very European, very old school.

It is not until further questioning that she states that she identifies as being white. When asked what box she checks off when filling out a passport application, she stated, “I always put caucasian... but yeah, that’s how. I mean, if there was a box for, I don’t know, I don’t know, I always identify myself as caucasian because I don’t necessarily fall under all the other categories.” Similarly, Haley discussed her ethnic ties to Canada and Greece in her discussion of racial identity, highlighting:

Um for me I mostly identify as being, well I was born in Canada, though I am second generation so my grandparents came to this country from Greece. So I obviously identify with my Greek heritage as part of my like cultural and racial identity. But I feel as though like my ties to that background are probably much

less than my students who have come from their countries and have not been born in Canada.

It is not until she is asked the same question as Deanna regarding filling out a passport application that she stated, “Yeah I normally identify as being white because there’s no like box for like Mediterranean.” Amber first identified as being “tenth generation Canadian” when asked about her racial identity, stating that “like anytime I talk to my friends, I’d describe myself as Canadian. But I feel like that’s weird to a lot of people.” Yet, Amber also went on to say that “there’s English and French going back but like I’m caucasian and I don’t identify with any type of other race.”

Sarah took the longest to answer the question of her racial identity, first admitting “Um... I have no idea. Okay [laughs]. Um...” There was a long pause before she was probed further about how she identifies herself in regards to her race. She then responded, “Um, well I would consider myself caucasian. I... I guess well, I guess I’ve never really thought about it, since I’m having such a difficult time right now thinking of something.” In contrast, Anthony questioned his racial identity in terms of how he personally identifies versus how he is perceived by others, asking, “I look white, am I white? I don’t really know.” He went on to say, “I don’t know if I actually am white or not and I think that’s a more honest answer than I’d like. I don’t really know. I appear white.” Yet, Anthony also highlights that “as much as I consider myself to be ethnic, I definitely qualify as being a white teacher” and “I elect and participate in being white.”

### **White Teacher in the Classroom**

After discussing the participants’ racial identities, they were asked if they thought their racial identities played a role in the classroom. Only one participant, Emily, believed

that her racial identity as a white educator does play a role, and a potentially problematic one, in the classroom:

I think it does play a role in the classroom because even if you don't mean to, your own background plays what is the norm because I try to bring in different diversities but in a way, when you do that it's bringing up the differences and saying oh we have to include this as well in that saying that it's an extra.

She continued by stating, "So even if it's not intentional, it's my background or my experience is set as the norm." Emily recognized the harm that this can have, particularly if a teacher is unaware of how their race influences the classroom environment:

Yeah I think that is a problem because as I mentioned, my background and my racial identity sets the norm whether I mean it to or not. And the fact that I've realized that happens really helps me to look outside that and to bring other ideas in. Whereas someone who doesn't see that as a racial identity would never think to look outside of that, they just think oh okay this is just the way the classroom is, where they don't realize that it is that way because of your racial identity.

Emily explained that this understanding came from personal experience, first coming from a small white town to dating a person of colour, as well as an elective course in her undergraduate education that focused on race and racism in Canada. Other participants who tied their racial identity to their ethnicity saw their ethnicity as a way to connect and relate to students, yet did not discuss how their white identity could potentially impact the classroom. Haley discussed growing up in a very religious, close-knit family, which although she has struggled with has allowed her to connect to students from different backgrounds:

Um I feel like although I identify with being like white and Christian, I feel like also, like I understand what it feels like to celebrate things differently from like the rest of your classmates or to have like different cultural backgrounds.

Deanna too discussed how her ethnicity and cultural heritage was a teaching advantage:

I think I already touched upon that but just I think that because I can offer so much more than just – like I was born and raised in Canada but I have not just that Canadian background, I have the European background and the South American background to me that I can, I'm very flexible.

Sarah, on the other hand, initially stated, “Yeah, I wouldn't say my racial identity affects anything in my classroom, yeah.” But when asked if her racial identity would affect her teaching practice and pedagogy, she responded:

Um I think that it, I actually think it makes me more aware of the differences – like especially when I'm teaching to a classroom where caucasian students are the minority, I think it makes me more aware of my differences and how I can try to relate and talk to my students where they feel comfortable and they don't see me as the 'white power' that sort of dictates their life.

Sarah continued by saying:

I think that being a white female, I think that students, parents of other cultures, they view you in a certain way and I think that changes how I do things. And like I said before, I have a certain upbringing and so that affects how I teach and how I view my students and I always have to be aware of that and whenever a bias shows through, try to recognize that and change it and adapt it.

Anthony also suggested potential bias in regards to his white racial identity as a teacher:

I... it plays a role because I am, no matter who you are, no matter how hard you try, you always teach a self portrait and since I think that I am white I will apparently teach like I'm white.

When asked what "teaching like I'm white" meant, he outlined:

I don't even know. What does, we had the discussion earlier, what does being white actually mean. I'll... I'll always see some of my students as being different. I think I will. And I don't think that recognizing differences is a bad thing. I think allowing them to dictate how I view them, or allowing them to influence how I act towards them, or letting it get in the way of me being the best possible teacher for them, that is when, that is when letting your ethnicity into the classroom gets in the way.

### **Whiteness: A Difficult Conversation**

Following the conversation of racial identity, both in and outside the classroom, the discussion led to the topics of whiteness and white privilege. A discomfort, and at times difficulty, in discussing and defining issues of whiteness and white privilege became apparent when participants were asked to engage with the terms. This is not entirely surprising based on the abundance of literature that suggests that whiteness and white privilege are often seen as taboo subjects, particularly among the dominant group, and often create feelings of guilt, anger, and dismissal (Case, 2012; Dei, 2000; Gillespie et al., 2002; Leonardo, 2004; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

### **Definitions of Whiteness**

The conception of whiteness was difficult if not unknown to the participants, who were asked to describe their understanding of the term. Several participants took many

pauses, often showing a clear discomfort, trying to find the words to define the term. For example, Sarah stated:

Um... I have. Um... [long pause]. Well, what I think... hm [long pause]. What comes to mind when I think of whiteness is a negative way to, like a negative way to describe someone that maybe not be white. So in terms of, like I lump that in with the term like 'Oreo' or 'Twinkie,' or you know? Things like that. That's how I think of it.

Anthony too showed great difficulty putting into words the definition of whiteness. After many seconds of silent deliberation, he responded, "whiteness among white people means fitting in. It means... it means that [long pause] it means that you are accepted among your peers. At least here, in a country that is predominately white." Yet, after more silent deliberation and pauses, Anthony admitted:

I'm not even sure what whiteness means. I look at it and I say, "That's a strange term." Whiteness. Is it the opposite of ethnicity? Is it a type of ethnicity? Is it, what is white culture? What is... what is a white way of thinking? What is, and I realize that it's a collection of desired traits that sometimes people look at across the world that people ascribe.

Anthony goes on to describe an experience he had in Southeast Asia where he was asked to be photographed on multiple occasions by the people in the rural Southeast Asian town he was in. This led him to further describe his understanding of whiteness:

And I have a feeling way back when we considered whiteness to be the panopticon of intelligence, of beauty, of society, and stuff like that. And then we realized that it's just, no no no, it's just another type. It's another type of ethnicity.

That's what I think whiteness is and that's the sentence that I was struggling for for about three and half minutes of silence there.

Julie too was open about the difficulty she has in describing the idea of whiteness, stating:

Um... I'm not really sure. I would say it has to do with your skin colour. Um I'm not really sure how I would describe it. I would say um... I guess just even not associating with something that's visibly white. I don't know how I would actually describe that word. I'm not really sure. I think that's a hard one for me to describe. Um... I mean you have the stereotypical ideas about what being white means but really white is just a colour so I guess stereotypically you would be kind of an average citizen, you wouldn't be the minority in the community I grew up in, although somewhere else in Canada you definitely could be. Um, I'm not sure. I'm not sure if I have anything to say about that cause I'm not really sure how I would do it.

Similarly, Haley admitted to not understanding the term whiteness but does say she has heard of it. Despite not fully understanding what it means, she offers a speculation about what whiteness is:

I have but I'm not even really sure, like I'm not really understanding of what that means. I feel like if I could hazard a guess as to what it means it would probably be like what is normal in society. So in our society it is normal to have white skin, it is considered normal to be a Christian, it is considered normal to have like be middle class - like those kind of values are considered to be white so that might be what whiteness means.

Haley associated whiteness with a definition of white identity, something she does not necessarily agree with:

Um I don't know that I necessary like that like blanket statement of what it means to be white because I feel like even within, like when you check that box and you're like oh I'm white, there are a million different cultures and religions and all sorts of things that go with it.

Deanna, on the other hand, simply stated that she has never heard of the term and asked for a definition, which the researcher provided briefly, describing the ideology of power and privilege that is connected to a white body. No participant other than Amber directly mentioned issues of power when defining whiteness, yet several participants did allude to power and vaguely implicated him or herself within the term.

### **White Privilege**

Participants were also asked to discuss the term white privilege, which although was more commonly recognized, was still met with some resistance and discomfort. Each participant focused and discussed different aspects of the term, with varying degrees of criticality and acknowledgement. Two participants, in particular, connected the idea and definition of whiteness directly to white privilege. When asked about her understanding of whiteness, Amber replied:

Like being caucasian? Are you talking about the whole power dynamic where when people are white they're like – cause I feel like it's a privilege thing I guess and if you're white you're technically more privileged than any other race.

Emily too aligned whiteness with white privilege, alluding to the invisibility that this privilege can often have for those of the dominant group:



Um to me whiteness is the idea of white privilege. It's the idea that we don't see – I don't know how to say this – white privilege is having society norms fit your personality and your background and your culture. So someone with white privilege or whiteness may not see that as a problem because society fits who they are and it very much determines how society is run. The whole set up of society and the structure behind it is all set to white privilege and that's the way I see it.

Despite recognizing that she has never heard of the term whiteness, Deanna did identify the term white privilege and stated:

Well I think that goes back like many many years, like slavery times, probably even before that. I think that white people think that they're the best, that they have the right to do whatever it is they want, whenever it is they want and they don't care who gets hurt. I don't necessarily think that's so much the case now but I think it was, especially with slaves and all that. And sometimes you just, you know, you don't have to be white to be successful. Like you don't have – and just because you're white doesn't mean that you have the right to impose on somebody else. Like we're all equal, we were all created equal, we have the same, we should have the right to have the same everything, right, no matter what our skin colour is.

Deanna suggested that white privilege was not as prevalent in today's society and also touched on the notion of meritocracy, stating, "It's all about your perseverance and your motivation to do whatever it is that you want to do in life." Sarah, on the other hand, discussed the vagueness of the term white privilege, highlighting:

White privilege to me, I think of North American society. White privilege is... it's so vague I just don't even know where to begin. Okay. Talking about the view that white, people who are white are better and they deserve more and that therefore they are able to exceed or succeed easier and they are given more opportunities to succeed, they're given more opportunities to fail without hurting their chances to do what they want.

Emily discusses the different ways white privilege presents itself in society, making the connection to individual, institutional, and systemic levels:

So white privilege as I kind of talked about was having society and societal norms set to your own culture and part of that is, like I said, is kind of the privilege behind it is not even realizing it. If you're just thinking that that's just the way it is and society is just this way without realizing that hey it's set for white people and the white system and white values and I think it runs deep in society, whether it's just the stereotypes people have to the fact that the education system or the government is run in those ways. So it could be as simple as someone's stereotype that they have, to the actual structure of society.

Amber was much briefer in her discussion of the term, citing "maybe like being treated nicer in certain areas or getting jobs and stuff" as examples of white privilege in society.

In contrast, Anthony discussed white privilege in terms of representation and the media:

If you look at the majority of television programming, if you look at the vast majority of media that is consumed by people of many ethnicities all over the world, there's an incredibly large part of the world that is white. Visibly white. For the third of the world - a third of the world generously - being white, we do

seem to have a whole lot more of the resources. We do seem to have a whole lot more of the camera. We do seem to have a whole lot more of the visibility. And I think that white privilege means that we're seen everywhere, so people know us.

Haley related white privilege to her own experiences versus some of her students, stating that "being white and having grown up with that kind of privilege of always being accepted, always feeling normal is a huge advantage in our society, whereas a lot of kids don't grow up like that." When asked what comes to her mind when she hears the term white privilege, Julie connected white privilege to personal experience as well, discussing her experience in Africa as a white woman:

Um I would say there's a lot of things that come to mind [laughs]. My experiences in Africa would probably be the first ones cause that's when I really experienced it personally. Actually being put on that little pedestal of here are all the wonderful things that go along with your skin colour, so um yeah, I think that white privilege is definitely something that is evident in our society. Although I would say to a lesser extent in the community that I'm in because I find that almost everyone is white in my community. So I don't see it as often or as blatantly as if you were to go to Africa and be the only white person.

It is evident that the participants had varying degrees of understanding and discomfort when it came to the term white privilege. This continued when they were asked how they felt about the term and how white privilege affects them and their daily lives, especially considering that they identify as white. Three participants acknowledged their privileges as a white person, with fluctuating levels of criticality, such as Anthony, who discussed his lack of choice in having this privilege:

I enjoy it regardless of whether I want it or not. I don't have a choice in the matter. I'm seen as being white, therefore people assume that I speak English. People assume that I, people look at me and if I was acting out in many of the same ways that... if I acted out in a traffic stop I'm never worried I'm going to get shot. I would if I was another ethnicity.

He went on to highlight how white privilege makes him feel as someone who is seen as a white man:

Two things: the selfish part of me says it's a really nice blanket that I get to always carry with me, the unselfish part of me says wow, what do other people have to deal with? How much worse is their life because they don't look like me?

Deanna touched on how this privilege should make her feel, but also the more frustrating aspects:

Well theoretically it should make me feel great, right? Cause I'm white, right? But it's very frustrating when, you know, two people go up for the same job and one is white, one is Black, one is, you know, Middle-Eastern, from a different nationality whatever, and do I think the white person should get it just because they're white? If they're the most experienced and they're the most qualified, sure. But do I think they should get it just because they're white? Then no. Like I think it's what you bring to the table, not what you look like.

Emily discussed her confusion with white privilege and the difficulty in resisting it in her daily life:

I understand it more than some people, how some people don't even realize it's there and I'm glad that I'm aware of it and I try to be conscious of it, whether it's

the way I teach in realizing that one way doesn't suit everyone, to also trying to reform stereotypes that have been ingrained in me. But yet I'm still confused on what more is there, what more can I do? Because I'm one person and I wish it wasn't this way, but what can I do to actually help with the problem and society?

While Anthony, Deanna, and Emily highlighted some of the benefits of having white privilege, along with some of the more frustrating and confusing aspects, other participants focused on how it more so affects the nondominant group. Haley mentioned the anger and sadness she feels for her marginalized students, stating:

Um... I think it just makes me feel, it makes me feel really sad for my students and it makes me really... feel sympathetic to what they're going through because I never as a 13-year-old I never felt that I was hated just by virtue of this is what I look like and this is what I believe in.

Sarah discussed similar feelings but in regards to her own success and the continuation of white privilege:

It makes me angry because I know that in some ways I am part of the white privilege and I have succeeded because of that view. And that makes me angry because... that's not how it should be. Like my success has, I can't think of the word, but it has helped white privilege, or that idea of white privilege, continue on.

Julie and Amber, on the other hand, more actively dismissed the role white privilege had on their own lives as white members of Canadian society. For example, when asked to discuss a time, if any, when she recognized her own privilege, Julie replied:

Um...where I recognized my privilege? Nothing that stands out, I don't think.

Um... I think, I don't – I'm not really sure. I think there's often like assumptions that are associated with being I guess a typical white Canadian. I guess if I were to walk down downtown somewhere and there was someone homeless they might associate me with having money, but I don't think that's there's anything that stands out in my own context.

Despite recognizing that white privilege does exist, Julie acknowledged that the term and its implications have not resonated with her. Julie went on to explain, "Because I teach a predominately white group I think it's important to teach about other cultures and diversity but I don't see – I don't know, I guess it's just less obvious because I don't have to see it everyday." Similarly, although Amber recognized that white privilege has played a role in her life, she struggled to see how significant that role may be, stating, "I understand that it's a part of society but I don't know how much it's like directly affected me being white. Maybe more so in the back of my family... going back." She also highlighted:

Um I don't think that I've gotten specific places in my life specifically because of my race. I mean, the area that I grew up in everybody was very– like there was not very much diversity – so I feel like it didn't really play a huge role there. And like I don't think I got hired, cause like the area I work in is very multicultural and they have a lot of multicultural teachers so I don't think that that played a role in it either. But... ... I definitely haven't faced a lot of like adversity in my life because of my race... at all.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter began by exploring participant definitions and perceptions of diversity, both in and outside of the classroom context. I then discussed the influence of the larger Canadian discourse, focusing on participant perceptions of national identity and ideas of multiculturalism and acceptance in comparison to the United States. This chapter also presented participant experiences in his or her teacher education program, which suggested a lack of critical content surrounding diversity in these programs and a need for more support for educators when it comes to diversity issues. Following this discussion, I displayed participant insights regarding their own racial identity as white educators and how this role does, or does not, play a role in the school setting. Lastly, I discussed the difficult conversations that arose when discussing the terms whiteness and white privilege. This presentation of results aligns with the purpose of this research, which was to investigate how new teachers understood diversity, specifically whiteness, and how they connected these perceptions to their experiences in the courses they completed in their teacher education program. The next chapter provides an in depth discussion of the results in connection to the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and reviewed literature. Recommendations and implications for practice and future research will also be explored.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS**

This chapter will provide an overview of the study, a discussion of results, and implications for practice and future research. I will explore the prominent and interconnected themes that emerged in connection to the research questions and theoretical frameworks for this study and will conclude with final remarks.

### **Summary of the Study**

While Ontario schools continue to become more racially diverse, the teaching population remains the same, with the majority of teachers being white, middle class females (Dlamini & Martinovic, 2007; Solomon et al., 2005). Despite the abundance of privileged bodies in the teaching profession, discussions of diversity and privilege, particularly surrounding race and whiteness, are seldom discussed in a critical, constructive manner in teacher education (Picower, 2009). This study sought to address the lack of critical discussions around diversity in Ontario teacher education programs, which in turn contribute to and uphold uncritical discourses of diversity. The purpose of this research was to investigate how new educators understood diversity, particularly whiteness, and how they connected these understandings to their experiences in the courses they took in their teacher education program.

This study used a qualitative research design and applied Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodological framework. CDA proved to be a beneficial methodology to use, particularly Gee's (2011) CDA tools, as it helped provide substance when analyzing the language used by the participants and how and why particular language was used to discuss sensitive, taboo topics such as diversity, race, and whiteness. Purposive, homogenous sampling was used to recruit seven recent teacher



education graduates. All participants, except for one, graduated from a teacher education program in Ontario within the last 5 years and had at least 1 year of teaching experience. Although not required for participation in the study, all participants identified as white. A one-on-one semistructured interview was conducted with each participant that explored topics ranging from diversity, race, and whiteness to teacher education and classroom experiences. Three overarching themes emerged through analysis of the data: (a) the relationship between diversity and the greater Canadian discourse, (b) the discomfort of whiteness and privilege, and (c) the insufficient support and critical content in teacher education.

### **Discussion**

This section will highlight the three central themes of this study: diversity, whiteness, and teacher education. In doing so, it is important to acknowledge the two research questions that framed this research:

1. What is/are the discourse(s) surrounding diversity, more specifically whiteness, among teacher education graduates?
2. How do recent teacher education graduates/new teachers connect their perceptions of diversity, specifically whiteness, to courses they took in their teacher education program?

Both the research questions and theoretical frameworks for this study will be addressed through an analysis and discussion of the data. In particular, each subtheme will be framed by one of six CDA tools chosen and applied to this study. As such, it is important to note the relationship and interconnectedness of Gee's (2011) tools. Therefore, although one particular tool is applied to each of the six subthemes, these tools are not applied in

isolation of each other. All six of the tools used in this study overlap and are applicable to each of the main themes and subthemes discussed, but as Gee (2011) argues, “some tools will yield more illuminating information than for other data” (p. x). The connection between themes and between existing literature will also be examined, along with the implications of each theme for the education context in Ontario and for future research in the field of education. Relevant literature will be used to support the results of the research, yet as a qualitative study, there is no definitive answer provided. Instead, this section aims to deliver interpretations and a critical analysis of the complex social phenomena being explored (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

### **Diversity and Canadian Discourse: “We just accept everyone, it’s fantastic”**

One of the main goals of this research was to investigate how new teachers understood diversity, and more specifically, whiteness. Question one, which aligns with this goal, aimed to investigate the discourse(s) of diversity among teacher education graduates. The data suggest that the greater Canadian discourse on diversity impacted the participants’ own ideas on the topic, with ideas of neutrality and acceptance being common in the participants’ discussions surrounding diversity.

**The greater Canadian discourse.** The findings, which demonstrate the participants’ beliefs in an accepting, multicultural Canada, connect to Gee’s (2011) “Big ‘D’ Discourse Tool” (Tool #27) as it finds the participants enacting the socially recognizable identity of white Canadians who believe their nation to be morally good. As Gee (2011) argues, “Discourse gives us our initial and often enduring sense of self and sets the foundations for our culturally specific vernacular language (our “everyday language”)” (p. 179). Canada as a multicultural nation is a long-standing trope that is

often associated with a Canadian national identity (Bedard, 2000; Dhamoon, 2009; Satzewich & Liodakis, 2010). The findings further suggested this, with many participants disclosing that although the Canadian national identity is complex and often unclear, multiculturalism is a strong Canadian identifier. The notion that Canada is a multicultural nation is linked to the national discourse of diversity that focuses on ideas of acceptance, tolerance, and harmony. Indeed, “accepting,” “diverse,” and “multicultural” were words commonly used by all of the participants to describe Canada. Several participants also proposed that Canada was an overly welcoming nation that accepted all people, especially when compared to their southern neighbour, the United States. This discourse on the part of the participants mirrors the larger Canadian discourse on multiculturalism, suggesting that this big D discourse has an impact on the everyday language of (white) Canadians. This aligns with Gee’s (2011) idea that “we do not invent our language, we inherit it from others” (p. 176). With the mainstream media, the Canadian government, and Canadian schools often suggesting, upholding, and celebrating this big D discourse, it is not surprising that many Canadians are influenced and take up this language in their everyday discourses.

Yet, this widely held perception of Canada as an accepting and welcoming nation is not only problematic, but also questionable when looking at Canada’s past and present history with marginalized groups (Bedard, 2000; Lund, 2003). Claiming that Canada is a harmonious and welcoming country for all citizens leads to what Anderson (1999) refers to as “diversity without oppression” (p. 6). Viewing diversity without oppression limits critical discussions around privilege and power and restricts possibilities for change. In turn, this notion disregards the discrimination, marginalization, and prejudice to which

those of the nondominant group are subjected within the very nation that prides itself on multiculturalism (Taylor & Tilley, 2013). Downplaying the racism that occurs within Canada discounts the experiences of marginalized Canadians and disregards the racism embedded in national policies, laws, and regulations. Yet, doing so speaks to the big D Discourse around diversity and multiculturalism in Canada, one that focuses on tolerance and harmony and is devoid of racist and colonialist histories. As Bedard (2000) argues, one of the most troubling parts about this downplaying of racism is that many Canadians believe, and are continually told to believe, that they are tolerant, accepting individuals who support multiculturalism. The participants are also further enacting the socially recognizable role of a white Canadian—and upholding the dominant Discourse in Canada—by using this discourse to discuss Canada, diversity, and multiculturalism. Tolerance, despite being praised as a Canadian identifier, is a contested and problematic rhetoric. Brown (2006) is particularly critical of the idea of tolerance, stating that “one should not be fooled by the rhetoric of acceptance and tolerance within contemporary Canada, it is only in effect when the racialized Other is not causing a disturbance” (p. 80). Kaur (2014) too argues against the praise of tolerance, believing tolerance to be a “tool for control and domination” which preserves a colonial culture (p. 72). Therefore, while educators may claim inclusive approaches, Canadian multiculturalism discourse is pervasive and structures how diversity is taken up and understood in society. This pervasive discourse can also affect what educators do or think is necessary in regards to diversity and multicultural education. By believing that Canada is an accepting, equitable nation for all, one may not see the need to have critical, in-depth discussions regarding diversity, discrimination, and privilege because it simply is not a visible issue. Hence, the

engrained bigger Discourse surrounding diversity and multiculturalism in Canada influences an individual's little d or everyday discourse.

**Neutral definitions of diversity.** Gee's (2011) "Significance Building Tool" (Tool #14) connects to the findings surrounding the neutral discussions of diversity had by many of the participants. This tool looks at how "words and grammatical devices are being used to build or lessen significance for certain things and not others" (Gee, 2011, p. 92). The findings revealed that the participants broadly defined diversity through the use of various social identifiers, such as race, religion, and socioeconomic status. Although all of the participants saw diversity in regards to social identifiers, the broad term allowed for varying foci and definitions among each participant. Ahmed (2007) discusses the risk of having an expansive list of meanings for the term diversity, highlighting:

If diversity is not tied down as a concept, or is not even understood as signifying something in particular, there are clearly risks, in the sense that people can then define 'diversity' in a way that may actually block action. (p. 240)

This is a potential downfall to using the term diversity in policy and guidelines, as the term may be interpreted and used differently by different people. Similarly, each participant's definition of diversity varied, with a range of social identifiers being listed. This in itself is not necessarily problematic; it is unrealistic to assume that each participant will list and discuss every social identifier that helps create the term diversity. However, it can provide insight into what forms of diversity may be less acknowledged or recognized, or vice versa, and for what reasons. As well, when looking at the Significance Building Tool, focusing on specific identifiers in relation to diversity can lessen the significance of others. For example, Milner (2010) discusses how "too many

educators gloss over race as an important area of consideration in broader diversity discourses” (p. 7). This is due to various reasons, as he explains, including that race is often seen as a taboo topic of discussion and because people are uncomfortable talking about the subject matter. In support of Milner’s argument, the data suggest that the participants were, in fact, not comfortable discussing issues of race, even if they included this social identifier in their definition of diversity.

Although the participants’ definitions of diversity varied slightly, there were also commonalities, with ideas of individuality, uniqueness, and acceptance being at the core of their understandings. These ideas are closely connected to the big D Discourse in Canada surrounding diversity and multiculturalism and Gee’s (2011) Big D Discourse tool. With these understandings also comes the idea that we are all unique; that diversity is ever-present. Two participants in particular, Anthony and Haley, questioned the notion of a diverse classroom, suggesting that every classroom, in some way, is diverse.

Although this may be true, it should not take away from the necessity of bringing critical attention to issues related to diversity, such as racism, sexism, and classism. Viewing diversity from this lens, as ever-present, can create reluctance or dismissal of diversity discussions, particularly difficult or challenging ones. Moreover, it can lessen the significance and importance of race and discussions around race in and outside the classroom. Common reasoning is that because diversity is everywhere and we are all diverse, there is no need to make it a focal point or the center of a discussion. Therefore, when participants used words and phrases similar to “everybody is diverse” or “Canada is a diverse, accepting country,” it could actually lessen the significance of discussing and incorporating critical issues surrounding diversity. In contrast is the notion that because a

particular form of diversity does not seem to be present in a classroom, it does not need to be addressed. This was the case for one particular participant, who noted that issues of white privilege never “stuck” with her because the students she has taught have been predominately white. As CWS suggests, with whiteness and white privilege often being invisible entities to those of the dominant group, the necessity of discussing it and making it more visible goes unnoticed. Hence, CWS supports seeking to expose whiteness and making it a more visible concept (Frankenberg, 1997).

**Implications.** The study revealed a connection between the larger, big D Discourse in Canada surrounding multiculturalism and diversity and the little d discourse of the seven teacher participants. Specifically, with ideas of acceptance and tolerance permeating the larger Canadian Discourse of diversity, many of the participants reiterated these ideas in their interviews. It further revealed that the evasiveness of this larger Canadian discourse impacts what teachers do, and do not, discuss and incorporate into their classrooms, with very few examples being provided by the participants about diversity-related discussions or lessons they have had in the classroom. I believe this is problematic considering that the Canadian discourse of diversity centers on contested ideas of tolerance and acceptance. The implication of this connection between the big D and little d discourse surrounding diversity is a potential lack of focus on critical dialogue regarding diversity issues throughout the nation. With the larger Canadian Discourse of diversity suggesting that we Canadians are morally good, accepting people, it diminishes the acts of discrimination faced by many Canadians based on identifiers viewed as outside the norm of Canadian society. This harmful discourse also encourages educators to not discuss or address issues of discrimination and privilege because these issues do

not exist within the Canadian discourse. Instead, “happy talk” is prominent, which focuses on the celebration of differences, devoid of discussions of discrimination and injustice (Ahmed, 2012; Bell & Hartmann, 2007; Dhamoon, 2009; Lund, 2003; Taylor & Tilley, 2013). Teacher education needs to find a way to break away from this happy talk discourse that permeates our lives and our classrooms in Canada in order for a more critical, meaningful discussion to take place about diversity.

### **Whiteness and Privilege: “Most definitely it’s uncomfortable”**

Question one also sought to discover, more specifically, the discourse(s) surrounding whiteness among teacher education graduates. The findings revealed a strong discomfort and unfamiliarity with the terms whiteness and white privilege, suggesting discussions around these difficult, yet important, topics are not prominent in the participants’ teacher education programs. The distress and inexperience with these topics also created a barrier for having more in-depth, critical conversations with the participants, which could translate into impediments with their students in the classroom.

**Identifying as white.** The “This Way and Not That Way Tool” (Tool #9) is a useful tool to apply to the findings surrounding whiteness and racial identity, which focuses on why “the speaker built and designed the grammar in the way in which he or she did and not in some other way” (Gee, 2011, p. 55). With all seven participants identifying as white, albeit with varying degrees of difficulty, it is valuable to analyze how they defined their white identity and what words and/or grammatical devices they used to do so. Two participants identified as white quickly when asked, while others struggled with their answer or more closely identified with their ethnicity than their race. Research suggests that this is not uncommon, with white people having the privilege of



never having to consider themselves as racialized beings (Case, 2012; Lund & Carr, 2013; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). As Lund and Carr argue, “most of us (White people) have never been taught to think of ourselves as racialized beings, and certainly not to be part of the conversation on racism” (p. 109). This provides insight into why many of the participants may have had difficulty in quickly identifying as white, with one participant even stating that she had “never really thought about it” when asked what her racial identity was.

Three participants, Amber, Deanna, and Haley, identified with their ethnic origins more so than their race. It was not until further probed that the three participants stated that they were white, although the term caucasian was the more common terminology among these three participants. The participants more commonly used the term caucasian despite I as the researcher always using white as terminology. This is particularly valuable in connection to Gee’s (2011) ninth tool, as it raises the question as to why these two participants chose to use the words “ethnicity” and “caucasian.” With research, particularly in the field of CWS, indicating that whiteness is an invisible construct to those of the dominant group, it suggests that the participants were more adjusted to identifying with their ethnicity than their race, as their race is not something that is often discussed or made visible (Case, 2012; Lund & Carr, 2013; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Moreover, with race often being seen as a taboo topic, the participants may have made these grammatical choices to avoid in-depth and critical discussions about race in relation to their identities. On the other hand, the term “caucasian” reinforces racial ideology, despite its common usage and the assumption in broader society that it is politically correct terminology (Mukhopadhyay, 2008). Mukhopadhyay argues that the use of the

term, due to in part its meaning and origin, invokes “the false idea that races are naturally occurring, biologically ranked subdivisions of the human species and that Caucasians are the superior race” (p.12).

A fourth participant, Anthony, also considered himself to be an ethnic person, despite understanding that he “appears” white. This participant also commonly used the terms race and ethnicity interchangeably, suggesting that race and ethnicity hold the same meaning and implications. Again, the question is raised as to why the participants used these words interchangeably, whether consciously or unconsciously, and the impact this can have on significance and meaning. Sleeter (1996) argues that “equating ethnicity with race is a related strategy for evading racism” (p. 128) as it allows a white racialized person to dismiss their role in whiteness. Doing so can also be an attempt to put a white individual on a “parallel status” with other racialized groups (Sleeter, 1996). Identifying with one's ethnicity more so than race is another privilege that white people have, as they are able to see being white as a neutral position that does not need to be identified (Case, 2012). The implications of this neutrality and invisibility were evident in the findings, with most of the participants having difficulty placing themselves within the term white privilege and whiteness.

**Difficulty with whiteness.** The connection between the findings concerning whiteness and white privilege and Gee’s (2001) *The Connections Building Tool* (Tool #19) is also relevant. This tool focuses on how particular words and grammar devices are used to “connect or disconnect things or ignore connections between things” (Gee, 2011, p. 126). In the case of several of the seven participants, their words were used to

disconnect the relationship between themselves as white racialized bodies and whiteness/white privilege.

There was an evident shift in the interviews when I, the interviewer, brought up the topic of whiteness and white privilege. A once fluid dialogue turned into one with consistent pausing, silences, and breaks in conversation on the part of the participant. This shift demonstrated the difficulty of the subject matter for the participant and the lack of exposure to the terms whiteness and white privilege. The data further suggested this, with five participants showing difficulty defining the term whiteness. Some participants were more forthright about their lack of knowledge surrounding the term, while others slowly worked through their thought process and attempted a definition. The two other participants were quicker to discuss their understanding of whiteness, relating it to white privilege. The term white privilege was also discussed among all of the participants, with the findings suggesting that the term is more commonly recognized than the term whiteness, despite it still being met with some discomfort and resistance. Three participants acknowledged their privilege in having white racialized bodies, but with varying degrees of criticality. The other participants focused more so on their feelings of anger and sadness in regards to white privilege and in part for those who do not have the luxury of having these unearned advantages. Choosing to focus on the impact white privilege has on marginalized members of Canadian society and using words such as “angry” and “frustrated” ignores the connection the participant has to white privilege as a white individual. It moves the focus away from them as a white person and helps to disassociate their white racialized body from the issue; it makes their whiteness irrelevant in regards to the matter of white privilege. Moreover, two participants in particular,

Amber and Julie, actively dismissed the role white privilege plays in their lives. For example, recall Amber's belief that she had not "gotten specific places" in her life because of her race and privilege. By applying Gee's (2011) nineteenth tool, this example suggests that the participant is actively disconnecting the relationship between her white racial identity and the privileges she has gained throughout her life.

What McIntyre (1997) calls "white talk" is relevant to the findings of this study in regards to the discomfort participants felt when discussing and defining whiteness and white privilege. McIntyre describes "white talk" as "the behaviors and strategies that white teacher candidates adopt to avoid acknowledging or naming their privilege" (p. 46). These behaviours and strategies include, but are not limited to, the distress and discomfort created from the taboo topics being brought up and evading questions and conversation surrounding the issues of race, whiteness, and privilege, both of which were evident to varying degrees among the participants of this study. In alignment with CWS, the conversations with the participants regarding these topics further exposed the invisibility of whiteness and white privilege to the participants, all of whom are white. Although the discomfort during the time of the interview was at times uncomfortable, as Leonardo (2004) argues, discomfort is, in fact, necessary in order for people of the dominant group to acknowledge and address the history of racial disparity from which they benefit. Despite this, there was a common reluctance among the newly qualified educators to place themselves within the issues of whiteness and white privilege. Instead, many participants spoke of white privilege as something that, for the most part, affected marginalized groups but not them as members of the dominant group; white privilege existed but it did not affect them personally. With literature suggesting that this is not at

all uncommon, with white people often actively trying to distance themselves from discussions and issues regarding race and privilege, these findings are not necessarily unforeseen. Yet, they are problematic as recent literature also indicates that distancing oneself from diversity issues diminishes critical thought and discussion about one's role in these issues, particularly regarding race and privilege, and allows for white people to avoid being a part of the problem (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Picower, 2009; Taylor & Tilley, 2013). Moreover, the ideology of whiteness remains intact by race dynamics going unnoticed or being dismissed (Gillborn, 2005). Therefore, although the participants recognized that they were white, as Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, and Galindo (2014) argue, “knowing you’re white is not enough” (p. 297).

**Implications.** The findings revealed a great discomfort and lack of awareness on the part of the participants when it came to issues of whiteness and white privilege. The implications of this are vast, with a lack of understanding leading to a lack of critical discussion or reflection in the classroom setting regarding issues of race, whiteness, and privilege. I want to be clear that I am not demeaning these educators for not fully understanding the terms whiteness and white privilege and how it impacts their lives in and outside the classroom. To the contrary, I want to bring attention to the larger issue, which is that teachers (and the greater society) are not being taught about these issues and how to approach them. By doing so, whiteness remains intact and invisible to the dominant group. The fault is not necessarily on individual educators; teachers cannot be expected to discuss these topics, let alone critically, if they do not fully understand the system of whiteness and how they are situated within it or if they have not had

opportunities to learn about and critically reflect on the significance, role, and relevance of whiteness and privilege. I argue that this is why it is imperative for teacher education programs to engage in these difficult, yet necessary, conversations with teacher candidates. This aligns with the literature that suggests that teacher education programs need to provide spaces for teacher candidates to interrogate their privilege, unpack issues of diversity, power, and discrimination, and learn how to address these issues in their classrooms (Egbo, 2011; Solomon et al., 2005; White, 2012).

**Teacher Education: “It was so little and so inadequate it might as well not have existed”**

The objective of research question two was to investigate how recent teacher education graduates connect their perceptions of diversity, specifically whiteness, to their experiences in courses they took in their teacher education program. The findings revealed that participants learned little about diversity and, in particular, race and whiteness in their teacher education programs. The data suggests that the few discussions that did take place in these programs often failed to go beyond uncritical, liberal ideas of diversity, which provides limited support to these newly qualified educators who were going out into diverse classroom contexts.

**Critical content.** Gee’s (2011) “Identities Building Tool” (Tool #16) applies to the findings regarding the critical diversity content in teacher education, or lack thereof, discussed by the seven participants. When analyzing communication, this particular tool “asks what socially recognizable identity of identities the speaker is trying to enact or to get others to recognize” (Gee, 2011, p. 110). All of the participants acknowledged the lack of diversity discussions that took place in their teacher education program. This

acknowledgement was further supported in their discussions regarding issues of diversity, race, and whiteness, as the majority of the participants were unaware and uncomfortable with these topics. Several participants struggled to identify concrete examples of assignments or discussions that took place in their teacher education program that revolved around diversity issues. Other participants did provide some examples, yet were often deemed by the participant to be inadequate or largely unhelpful, suggesting that meaningful content regarding diversity was minimal. By doing so, the participants were enacting the identity of a new teacher, inviting others to see what they learned in their teacher education, and, arguably more importantly, what they are not trained to do as newly qualified educators. Their choice of words, which help to suggest that little critical content was discussed in their teacher training, raises questions about what should change in teacher education programs in Ontario. Yet, it is also important to consider that there may have been some critical content presented to the participants in their teacher education programs, they were just unable or unwilling to engage with the content or failed to see it as relevant. This possibility speaks to the resistance that is common among the dominant group when exposed to difficult topics of diversity, such as race and whiteness (Case, 2012; Dei, 2000; Gillespie et al., 2002; Leonardo, 2004; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Milner (2006) argues that “preservice teachers rarely enter teacher education courses with any conception of, interest in, or concern about cultural and racial diversity” (pp. 351- 352). With this in mind, teacher education programs need to take seriously the time and effort that is needed to educate and support teacher candidates as they prepare to enter the field of education. More importantly, they need to acknowledge the negative

impact it can have on both teacher perceptions of marginalized students and on the marginalized students themselves (Picower, 2009). Yet, literature suggests that diversity issues, particularly concerning race and whiteness, are not valued components of all Ontario teacher education programs (Egbo, 2011; Howe, 2014; Levine-Rasky, 2000). This inconsistency among the 12 teacher education programs in Ontario is in part due to teacher education not being standardized (Howe, 2014). It is also important to note, as Dlamini and Martinovic (2007) do, that programs and institutions can promote and advocate for diversity and social justice issues to be integrated into the curriculum, yet still not adequately support the diverse realities that teacher candidates will encounter in schools. As Ahmed (2007) argues, “saying diversity” does not necessarily equate to “doing diversity” (p. 243). This is why the critical component of a diversity dialogue is crucial to its meaningfulness. There needs to be rich, personal discussions about race and privilege with teacher candidates that go beyond liberal ideas of acceptance and multiculturalism. Solomon et al. (2005) also argue the importance of providing a safe space for teacher candidates to “address their questions and concerns, prepare them for the range of emotions they might experience, and provide strategies for including anti-discriminatory practices in their classroom” (p. 162). Educators need to place themselves within these issues and critically view themselves and their role within a hierarchical education system, or as Fine (2015) states, they “need to understand how to wear [their] skin critically” (p. 163). We cannot expect teacher candidates to do this independently; instead, teacher education programs need to provide students with the space, resources, and support to take this journey.



**Support.** Gee's (2011) "The Doing and Not Just Saying Tool" (Tool #7) is valuable when looking at what the participants are communicating about their learning (or lack thereof) in teacher education. As Gee (2011) asserts, language is often used for more than simply conveying information. Thus, it is important to consider "what is the speaker trying to DO and not just what is the speaker trying to SAY" (Gee, 2011, p. 42). The data revealed a clear need for additional diversity support among teacher candidates entering the workforce. Many participants explicitly stated this need, with many participants feeling underprepared for the vast range of diversity issues that arise in the classroom. This finding was further supported by the gap in comfort, critical content, and action on the part of the participants regarding diversity issues. Several participants declared that their teacher education program did not prepare them fully for the diverse classrooms they have entered since becoming qualified educators, including issues such as mental health, gender identity, religious differences, and racial tension. Therefore, although many of the participants are *saying* that they did not receive enough support in regards to diversity, they also may be providing reasoning for why they have not incorporated many diversity discussions or activities into their classroom or delivering a call for more help and mentoring as a new educator.

An abundance of literature supports the structural shift needed in teacher education programs in order to support teacher candidates regarding diversity issues (Egbo, 2011; Picower, 2009; Solomon et al., 2005; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003). Currently, despite some policy changes in recent years, Ontario teacher education programs are still focused on a particular outcome; teacher candidates are not taught to fight the system, but to simply exist within it. This system of compliance is further

upheld by the continuing shortage of teaching jobs in most of Ontario. In 2013, the Ministry of Education stated that approximately 9,000 teacher candidates graduate in Ontario each year, yet only roughly 6,000 are required (CBC News, 2013). The job shortage discourages risk-taking; it is safer for teachers to be silent on racial and other diversity issues, issues that are generally viewed as controversial or taboo, when the job market is vastly competitive. The literature also reminds us that teacher education is not bound by the Ministry of Education, making it difficult to ensure that all teacher education graduates receive the same diversity courses and training (Levine-Rasky, 2000). This raises the question of whether or not it is even possible to make a structural shift in teacher education towards a more critical, reflexive program that accounts for diversity issues as there is little consistency or acknowledgement about diversity issues across all teacher education programs. Yet, I argue that this shift in programming also needs to go beyond simply adding a course on diversity. As Sleeter (2000) states, “it is naïve to believe that one or two university courses will reconstruct an individual’s worldview and personal affiliations” (p. 133). Picower echoes this sentiment, highlighting that “the traditional model of depending on one semester in one course to interrupt a lifetime of white supremacist reinforcement is woefully insufficient in the attempt to prepare white educators to teach in urban settings” (p. 213). Simply put, it is not enough to add one or two diversity courses and assume that teacher candidates will not only be transformed, but also supported in their journey as an educator. The participants, who indicated that they did not have any diversity courses except for the odd required course or elective, help reiterate this further. Although that should not deter programs from instituting these important topics into teacher education programs, it

should also bring attention to the fact that diversity should be more than a course title, a part of the very foundation of the program. As such, diversity should be integrated across courses and curriculums and become a part of the daily discussions and learning that take place in teacher education.

**Implications.** With diversity topics, particularly ones regarding race and whiteness, considered taboo and controversial, there can be a reluctance to incorporate these issues into a successful course or program. That is, if these issues are even acknowledged as important and valuable in the first place, this acknowledgment needs to happen for even reluctance or resistance to take place. As Case (2012) argues, “whiteness remains invisible to dominant group members,” making it seemingly difficult for any changes to occur at the institutional level (p. 79). This was also evident in this study’s findings, with all seven participants having varying degrees of difficulty discussing the topics of whiteness and white privilege, particularly in relation to themselves as white racialized people. There were very few examples provided by the participants regarding the learning of difficult topics in teacher education, which helps to explain their discomfort and difficulty in discussing them in this study. There are two predominant implications of these findings. First is a continued lack of support for teachers entering diverse education contexts. The second is the continued cycle of predominately white educators unaware of their racialized bodies and their impact in the classroom. I want to recognize that teacher education programs and those who run them are not necessarily purposefully disregarding diversity issues. As mentioned, diversity issues largely remain invisible to and unnoticed by those of the dominant group. Moreover, I acknowledge the fact that these programs are largely successful in other areas regarding the preparation of

future teachers for their careers. Yet, I argue that there is a missing link in these programs when it comes to diversity and this missing link can have harmful effects, such as the continuing marginalization of marginalized students in the education system and whiteness and its role in schools remaining invisible. It is important to also note, however, that including diversity issues critically and meaningfully does not guarantee all educators will leave the program with a newfound appreciation and criticality around discourses that explore diversity and antiracist education. It begs the question: Even if the participants had received a more critical education and were able to recognize and understand their whiteness, what difference would that make? It is also important to consider that teachers are influenced by many different things, especially after gaining experience in the school context, such as school climate, induction programs, staff meetings, and professional development workshops. Ultimately, resistance is a common reaction to learning about race and whiteness, particularly in regards to its role and influence in one's life as a privileged member of society (Case, 2012; Dei, 2000; Gillespie et al., 2002; Leonardo, 2004; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). As such, this could have been the case for the participants of this study; they may have resisted what they were exposed to in teacher education in regards to diversity training. Students can and will resist this knowledge surrounding whiteness and it will not resonate with everyone, yet that should not limit the discussions had about race, diversity, and privilege with teacher candidates.

### **Recommendations**

I have argued throughout this study the need for teacher education programs and teacher candidates to approach diversity in a more critical, meaningful way. I further

argue that in order for us to move forward and make change, it requires an examination and integration of the three themes discussed in this chapter (diversity, whiteness, and teacher education). These themes are not separate entities, but interconnected, with each theme influencing and influenced by the other. With literature suggesting that teacher candidates are not fully prepared to support their diverse students and have little opportunity to discuss issues of diversity, whiteness, and privilege in their teacher education program, it is recommended that these issues become an integral part of Ontario teacher education programs. Further, it is important that teacher education programs provide spaces for teacher candidates to deconstruct and reflect on their experiences and discuss their emotions and understandings throughout the program (Solomon et al., 2005). As mentioned previously, this shift in teacher education should not simply be adding a course on diversity and checking it off the long list of topics that teacher candidates should learn. Instead, “opportunities for both self-reflection and instruction about historical oppression and current educational inequity should be provided throughout the entire teacher education experience” (Picower, 2009, p. 212).

With the current changes in teacher education from a 1-year to 2-year program, along with the continuing competitive job market, further research that addresses teacher education programs from a critical perspective of diversity is beneficial. Further research could be conducted that explores in detail the courses and structure of specific teacher education programs in Ontario and how they impact and support newly qualified educators. As I did not screen for race, gender, religion, or socioeconomic status in my study, future research could examine how these social identifiers influence participant perceptions of teacher education and diversity. For example, research could investigate

the difference among white and marginalized educators in their understandings of race and whiteness and how it impacts the classroom climate. Also, as this study focused predominately on racial diversity, further research could examine the understandings among newly qualified educators regarding other forms of diversity, such as gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. As such, I acknowledge that racial diversity is just one of the many pieces that make up human diversity; other forms of diversity intersect with race and one another and, thus, are important to address in teacher education programs too. All forms of human diversity create a hierarchical structure where some are privileged more than others. Lastly, future research should consider exploring the experiences of a broader range of teacher candidates from various teacher education programs in Ontario. With the majority of the participants for this study attending the same teacher education program, albeit in different years and different cohorts, it is recommended that a larger study with a greater sample size and geographical area be used.

### **Conclusions**

The discrepancy between a white-dominated teaching field and the diverse tapestry of Ontario schools, along with my own personal experiences as a teacher candidate, led me to explore the understandings of newly qualified educators in regards to diversity, race, and whiteness. As discussed in this chapter, the study highlights three major findings/themes. First, the data revealed the power of the often neutral, problematic big D discourses of diversity that are engrained in the Canadian psyche, which impact the little d discourses of predominately white Ontario teachers. Further, the data illuminate the discomfort in defining and discussing topics of race, whiteness, and privilege, which

impacted the participants' ability and/or desire to implicate themselves in these issues. Finally, it was found that teacher education did little to support teacher candidates in their understandings of these topics, leading to many of the participants feeling underprepared for the diverse classrooms in which they eventually taught. I believe the interconnectedness of these three main findings is significant and telling of what changes can and should be made to better support our teachers and our diverse students.

The implications of these three main findings on teachers, and, in turn, their students, are worth noting and were highlighted in this chapter. As such, I argue the vital importance of acknowledging the harmful effects of whiteness, privilege, and race issues remaining invisible in Ontario schools. Yet, this study was not intended to provide a concrete answer for solving the issue, nor was this study intended to place blame on educators. On the contrary, I hope that this study will bring attention to the missing link in teacher education in Ontario that is important for supporting educators and the diverse students they will one day teach and who continue to be disadvantaged in the Ontario school system. Further, I hope my research can spark discussions in the field of education about the importance of learning and understanding privilege, whiteness, and race. I see dialogue and the willingness to (un)learn these at times uncomfortable and difficult topics crucial for creating an equitable, antiracist classroom. With the cycle of white privilege looming over the Ontario education system, too often unnoticed and unquestioned, the benefits of a journey towards equity far outweighs the comfort in remaining silent.

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## Appendix

### Interview Schedule

#### Opening Questions:

1. Where did you attend your teacher education program? When did you graduate?
2. What are your teacher qualifications? (Grades, teachables, etc.)
3. What teaching experience do you have? Do you currently have a teaching position? If so, what is your title?
4. Can you describe your background (gender, class, etc.)?

#### Core Questions:

5. What things come to mind when you think about Canada?
  - a. Do you agree with them?
  - b. Does Canada have a national identity?
6. Do you think racism exists within Canada? Why or why not?
7. Describe your general understanding of diversity.
  - a. What does a 'diverse classroom' mean to you?
8. What opportunities did you have, if any, in your teacher education program to talk about and learn about diversity?
  - a) Describe some instances from your teacher education program when you learned about diversity issues in classrooms.
9. What prepared you in your teacher education program to address issues of diversity?
10. What was most difficult to learn about in your teacher education program in regards to diversity?
11. Do you feel comfortable dealing with diversity issues in classrooms? Why or why not?
12. What are some challenges you face when teaching in a classroom of diversity?
  - a. What are the pros and cons of having a diverse classroom?
13. As a teacher, what experiences, if any, have you had in classrooms concerning diversity?
  - a. How did those experiences make you feel?
  - b. How did you approach these experiences?
14. Does classroom diversity affect what you teach? Why or why not?
  - a. Does it affect how you teach? Why or why not?
15. What role, if any, do you think the teacher plays in teaching students about diversity?
  - a) Do you feel comfortable teaching students about diversity? Why or why not?

- b) Have you done any classroom lessons or activities that focus on diversity? If so, why? And what were they? If not, is there any particular reason why?
- 16. In your experience, and without naming any school or person, what has the school(s) you have worked at done to encourage inclusiveness, if at all?
  - a. Can you describe the general population of your school? (Both students and staff)
- 17. Describe your feelings and beliefs about your own racial identity.
- 18. In what ways, if any, does your racial identity play a role in your classroom?
- 19. Describe how your racial identity does or does not influence your pedagogy/teaching practice.
- 20. Describe your general understanding of Whiteness.
  - a. What discussions were had, if any, in your teacher education surrounding Whiteness?
- 21. What comes to mind in regards to “White privilege”? [provide definition if necessary]
  - a. How does the idea of White privilege make you feel?

**Closing Questions:**

- 22. Are there any remaining topics or issues you would like to address?
- 23. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding diversity in classrooms?